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Peter Forbes Robinson BA(Hons)

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# WORKERS' COUNCILS IN PORTUGAL

## 1974 - 1975

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## Workers' Councils in Portugal 1974/5

Democratic workplace organisations have provided the basic component of every significant working class revolutionary movement. One of the characteristics of revolutionary periods is how readily workplace organisations coordinate their struggles by establishing higher level bodies on the basis of elected delegates. The term "workers' council" is used in this sense - an organisation which links workers from different enterprises.

This thesis provides a substantial background chapter covering the events in Portugal in 1974/5 before describing, in depth, four studies of embryonic workers' councils. The case studies are of:

the Inter-Empresas	(May 74	- March 75)
the CRTSMs	(April 75	- June 75)
the Popular Assemblies	(July 75	- November 75)
the Setubal Comité de Luta	(October 75	- November 75)

In choosing the examples the following criteria were selected:

- a) the democratic nature of the organisations
- b) the importance of the revolutionary left
- c) their potential role, as envisaged by the organisation, as an alternative form of power?

The study draws upon first hand experiences as a political organiser in Lisbon, working for a British organisation, and upon interviews, mainly with activists from the revolutionary left. It tries to show some inter-relationship between this revolutionary left and the development of the workers' movement.

The conclusion is in two parts. The first is at the general level. It argues that the organisations managed to capture the limelight for brief moments, yet in retrospect, they never attained a leading role. By looking at the military, the role and failure of the popular power movement and the strength of its counterpart reformism, some suggestions are made as to why the workers' council movement was relatively weak. At the micro level workers' councils type formations are compared, looking specifically at the features identified as being salient.

The conclusion attempts to draw a distinction between the actual strength of the embryonic councils and their potential. However embryonic, the developments have a significance beyond that of the Portuguese political history insofar as they contribute to the body of knowledge about workers' councils and revolutionary activity.



## GLOSSARY of ACRONYMS

ADU	Assembly of Unit Delegates. These were representative assemblies inside the barracks to which officers, sergeants and soldiers sent delegates.
CAP	Confederation of Portuguese Farmers.
CDE	Democratic Committees for the Elections. Founded in 1969 for electoral purposes and also active in the 1973 elections. Originally composed of PCP, PS and progressive Catholics.
CDR	Committees to Defend the Revolution. These organisations emerged in May 1975, the purpose of which was to establish groupings who were prepared to defend, if need be with arms, the revolutionary process. The CDRs were set up by the PCP and MDP/CDE.
CDS	Social and Democratic Centre. Founded in June 1974, this party regrouped many on the right after April 25th.
CICAP	Centro de Instrucao de Conducao dos Automoveis do Porto. The military driving school in Porto. Following agitation for better conditions there was an attempt to shut it down in October 1975.
CIL	Cintura Industrial de Lisboa. The organisation 'of the industrial belt of Lisbon' was based upon the CTs and dominated by supporters of the PCP.
CM	Comissao de Moradores. Neighbourhood Committee.
CODICE	Central Committee for Dynamisation, controlled by the Fifth Division of the MFA.
COPCON	Continental Operations Command. Set up in July 1974 under the leadership of Otelo de Carvalho this was an internal security force of the MFA, incorporating units most loyal to the original programme.
CRT	Revolutionary Council of Workers. These were meant to be the (industrial) workplace arms of the CRTSMs.
CRTSM	Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors. Formed by the PRP/BR in April 1975 with the intention of setting up a network of Soviets, committed to an armed insurrection.
CT	Comissao de Trabalhadores. Workers' committee, usually elected by mass meetings.
CTT	Correios Telegrafos e Telefones. An enterprise responsible primarily for postal services, and whose workers went on strike in June 1974.
FEC/ML	A Marxist/Leninist electoral front connected with the OCMLP, which obtained 0.6% of the votes in the 1975 elections.
FSP	Popular Socialist Front. The result of a 'left' split in the PS in January 1975, led by Manuel Serra.

FUP	Frente Unitaria Popular. A short lived front which comprised the PCP as well as the MDP, FSP, PRP, MES, LCI and First of May group.
FUR	Frente de Unidade Revolucionaria (Revolutionary United Front). This was set up after the PCP left FUP by the MDP, FSP, PRP, MES, LCI and the First of May group.
GNR	National Republican Guard. A para-military police force. Used by the former regime to put down strikes and demonstrations.
Inter-Empresas	A Lisbon based federation of workers' committees. This initially emerged spontaneously in Lisbon after April 25th. It was most active January and February 1975, although it continued to formally exist for some months after.
Intersindical	The main national trade union federation, predominantly controlled by the PCP.
JSN	Junta for National Salvation. Established as the supreme High Command, after 25th April.
IRA	Institute for the Reorganisation of Agriculture.
LCI	Internationalist Communist League. Founded in 1974 this was the largest of the Trotskyist groups. It supported the Mandel tendency of the Fourth International.
LUAR	League of Union and Revolutionary Action. This was founded in 1967 and was responsible for a number of armed actions and bank robberies prior to April 25th, 1974.
MDP/CDE	Portuguese Democratic Movement. Originally formed in 1969 as part of the electoral front (see CDE). It transformed itself into a party in October 1974, although in practice it was perceived as being as a left front of the PCP.
MES	Movement of Left Socialists. Although it was only formalised as a party in May 1974 it originated from a network of socialist forums which had been active from 1970. These groups included of trade unionists, Catholics, and Students.
MFA	Movement of the Armed Forces.
MPLA	Angolan Popular Liberation Movement.
MRPP	Movement for the Reorganisation of the Party of the Proletariat. Founded in 1970 by students and young workers who left the PCP. Led by Arnaldo Matos.
ORPC(ML)	This was an amalgam of three Marxist/Leninist sects (CCR/ML, CARP/ML and URML). It founded the UDP and was to later help form the PCP(R).
PCP	Portuguese Communist Party, founded in 1921.
PCP(ML)	Portuguese Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist). Originating in the splits from the PCP in 1964, this maoist group was formed in 1970. It split after April 25th into two groups of the same name. The first of these published the paper <i>A Verdade</i> , identified with the electoral front called

PUP and joined the PCP(R). The other was recognised by China as the 'official' Portuguese maoist group and set up an electoral front called AOC. This was much disliked by other sections of the left and was banned from participating in the 1975 elections.

PCP(R) Partido Comunista Portugues (Reconstruido). Three Marxist/Leninist organisations (OCMLP, ORPC(ML) and CMLP) united to form the PCP(R).

PIDE International and State Defence Police. In 1970 became DGS (General Security Command). The Portuguese political police.

PM Military Police. This was under the control of COPCON until its dissolution.

PPD Popular Democratic Party. Party of the centre. Had ministers in every Provisional Government, except the Fifth.

PRP/BR Revolutionary Proletarian Party/Revolutionary Brigades. Split from the FPLN in 1972, setting up the Brigades which were responsible for various attacks on military installations before April 25th. Founded the CRTSMs.

PRT Partido Revolucionario dos Trabalhadores. Formed in February 1975, siding with the minority tendency within the Fourth International.

PS Socialist Party. Founded in 1973 and led by Mario Soares. Affiliated to the Second International.

PSP Public Security Police. Special force used against demonstrations.

RAL-1 First Light Infantry Regiment. Later renamed RALIS. Near Lisbon.

RASP Artillery Regiment of Serra do Pilar. Near Porto.

RCP Radio Clube Portuges. Radio station. Originally privately owned. Nationalised after November 25.

RE 1 Regimento de Engenharia 1. This engineering regiment was based in Pontinha and set up the Pontinha Popular Assembly.

RIS Regimento de Infantaria de Setubal.

SAAL Mobile Service for Local Support. Semi-government agency active in the slums and run-down residential areas.

SEDES An organisation of technocrats which existed before 25th April and was represented in some of the Provisional Governments.

SUV Soldados Unidos Vencerao (Soldiers United Will Win). A rank-and-file soldiers' organisation.

TAP Transportes Aereos Portugueses.

TLP Telefones de Lisboa e Porto.

UDP Popular Democratic Unity. An electoral front founded in December 1974 by three Marxist/Leninist groups (ref to the ORPC(ML)).

# WORKERS' COUNCILS IN PORTUGAL 1974/5

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"The actual unfolding of the revolutionary process takes place subterraneously, in the murky depths of the factory and of the minds of the countless multitudes that capitalism subjects to its laws. This unfolding cannot be controlled or documented."

Antonio Gramsci (1)

## INTRODUCTION

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## 1 Introduction

The attendance at some political demonstrations in Portugal 1974/5 exceeded that of the total Saturday turnout for the English Football League. In the working class bars there was intense discussion and argument. Talk of football was all but forgotten. Seven year old children could tell one about the many political parties of the left, their papers, badges and slogans. Furthermore they would explain why they supported a particular party. There was nothing but goodwill for the working class throughout the world. Workers discussed the situation in France, in England, Argentina and Brazil as if they'd been professors of politics all their lives. Posters advocating armed insurrection were legal. Even the bus tickets had political slogans on them.

The commanders of the state could no longer rely upon the army. Tanks rumbled in cobbled streets alongside, and carrying, demonstrating workers. The scale of factory occupations recalled Turin in 1920, Catalonia in 1936, France 1936 and 1968. And not only the factories were taken over. Popular clinics and cultural centres mushroomed. In one hospital the workers took over from the nuns and urged them to come and vote at the mass meetings. Empty houses and apartments were requisitioned. The organisation of tenants and residents was



incomparably larger than anything else seen in Europe. On the land, workers took over the estates and gave their communes names like 'Red Star' and 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'.

What the workers achieved and organised still has to be remembered, celebrated and analysed. The turmoil of '74 and '75 was probably the most observed and televised revolutionary period ever. The European left hired charter planes. A holiday-maker in Portugal now would see little evidence of those halcyon, unbelievable days. Some wall paintings may be visible, perhaps still splendid, but a slender tribute to the creativity of the painters, people with little artistic and political training who, within months, painted gigantic murals.

Since then the whole thing has been allowed to dissolve. Only a handful of books has appeared in English. (2) It is almost as if nothing happened; as if we have nothing to learn.

## 2 Workers' Councils

"When in April 1919 we decided - groups of threes, fours and fives - to begin publication of this review, *Ordine Nuovo*"

Gramsci asked the other comrades

"Does there exist in Italy a working-class institution at all comparable, or of the nature of, the Soviets? Anything which gives us the authority to state: 'The Soviet is a universal form, not a Russian, and exclusively Russian, institution?.' (3)

Gramsci answered his own question

"Yes, there is in Italy in Turin, the germ of a workers' government, the germ of Soviet"

In the next 18 months the germ took hold. The same question underpins this thesis - Did Soviets exist in Portugal?

What marks revolutionary movements is how easily, when faced with particular issues requiring practical solutions, workplace organisations coordinate their struggles by establishing higher-level bodies of elected delegates. The term "workers' council" is used in this sense - an organisation which links workers from different enterprises.

Besides Russia in 1905 and 1917, workers' councils have, in fact developed in almost all revolutionary situations in this century. They were evident in Germany in 1919, 1920 and 1923, Turin in 1920, Canton in 1925, Barcelona in 1936, in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. (4)

More recently we have seen the Chilean *cordones*, the Iranian *shoras* and the Polish inter-factory strike committees and the structures of *Solidarnosc* itself. (5)

As workers' councils (and workers' and soldiers' councils, workers' and peasants' councils, etc.) have been created in widely different conditions, it would hardly be surprising if they varied enormously. Clearly though, workers' councils - organisations which have linked different sections of the working class - have emerged in revolutionary

situations.

Some examples of what are ostensibly workers' councils are from a different tradition, e.g. in Yugoslavia and the kibbutzes in Israel. These are really experiments in workers' management. While their aim has been to create a new participative structure, in essence they are experiments which have been fostered by radical tendencies within the ruling establishments. They have sought to legitimise rather than overthrow the ruling order. They have been an attempt to incorporate working class energies. They stand outside those workers' councils which have emerged as an alternative power, a power from below, directed against the ruling powers.

Democratic workplace organisations have been the basic component of every significant working class revolutionary movement. It is here that the workers are first able to measure their growing power and first able to assess their own capacity for self-organisation. These organisations are true councils of workers but, in order to avoid confusion, the term "workers' councils" has not been used to describe organisation in one single workplace. Subordinate, recallable committees are elected directly and indirectly from mass meetings. Although such organisations appear with a variety of names, even in Portugal, I have usually used the common one, *Comissoes de Trabalhadores* (CTs), to denote them.

This writer has not been able to find, in one volume, a comparative study of workers' councils. Anton Pannekoek's *Workers' Councils*, written after the Second World War, says almost nothing about them. *The*

*Western Soviets - Workers' councils vs Parliament 1915-1920* by Donny Gluckstein concentrates upon the experience around and immediately after the First World War in Russia, Germany, Italy and Britain (Glasgow). Oskar Anweiler, a German Professor of Education, has done a comprehensive study, confined to Russia, called *the Soviets*.

This thesis features 4 detailed studies of organisations resembling workers' councils but before examining them it is important to step back and look briefly at how the Marxist tradition has accounted for them.

### 3 Workers' Councils and the Marxist Tradition

Mainstream sociology defines class according to criteria such as occupation, income, consumption patterns and market capacity. While such factors must be taken into consideration the problem with definitions based upon class descriptions is that one can arrive at an endless fracturing of class structure derived from empirical measures. Such considerations do not explain why 'middle class' officers, students and government employees were radicalised during the Portuguese Revolution.

The strength of the Marxist analysis is that it defines class by the relations of groups to the means of production. I prefer to use the term 'working class' to refer to that group of people in society whose income is derived from the sale of their labour. Housewives, the infirm, children, the unemployed, who live off the proceeds of the labour of others, such as members of the family, can be included as members of the

working class. 'Working class' is therefore not restricted to manual workers in factories. The relationship to the means of production affects, by means of collective organisation, both the potential generation of class consciousness, and the power relationships within society.

Lenin and Trotsky wrote about the representative bodies of workers', peasants' and soldiers' delegates - soviets. The soviets are forms of workers' councils, but highly developed insofar as that, in 1917 at least, they included soldiers and peasants as well as delegates from workers' organisations. I have restricted use of the word 'soviet' to the Russian context whereas 'workers' council' is used to describe the general form. There is, perhaps, another distinction to be made: the Soviets were directly involved with the taking of power, whereas most workers' councils have not reached those heady heights.

Revolutionaries from the Anarcho-Syndicalist and the Marxist traditions have foreseen, been involved in, and have also tried to analyse the experiences of workers' councils. But within the revolutionary movement there is still a lot of sifting and analysing to be done. Outside this movement there is a handful of sociologists and historians who have addressed the subject. Those analysts who have been concerned with maintaining or merely reforming society will have little inclination to fit workers' councils in the picture.

The *Communist Manifesto* proclaimed that the proletariat would organise as the ruling class, but there was little indication as to how it would

do so. Two years later, while formulating arguments against Blanquism, Marx asserted that the proletariat must

"erect their own revolutionary workers' governments, whether in the form of municipal executives and municipal council, or of workers' clubs and workers' committees - so that the bourgeois democratic government not only lose the backing of the workers, but also from the beginning find themselves watched and threatened by institutions behind which stands the entire mass of workers" (6)

Marx returned to the theme vividly, in 1871 when defending the Paris Commune:

"But the working class could not simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes....

Its true secret was this. It was essentially a working class government, the product of the struggle of the reproducing against the appropriating class.." (7)

*The Civil War in France* brilliantly defended the Paris Commune although Marx later in private correspondence, argued 'that the Commune is no way Socialist, nor could it be'.(8) The Paris Commune abolished political power *per se*, i.e the state, and restored power to society. But it lacked the resources to overcome the poverty and destitution and thereby build a socialist society. There were hardly any sizeable workplaces in the Paris of 1871. This lack of an economic base resulted in its electoral franchises being based upon geographic constituencies, not upon workplaces. While the Paris Commune produced a profusion of inspirations, the lack of workplace representation meant it was not yet a workers' council but an antecedent.

In Russia the first workers' council was not from St Petersburg but Ivanovo Voznesenck. Ivanovo Voznesenck is a large textile district 200 miles to the south of Moscow. The council was formed on the 15th of May

in 1905, basically arising out of a strike wave in which up to 40,000 people actively participated. The soviet numbered 110 deputies. After it was outlawed it met on the banks of the Tanka River. It was more than a strike committee because it grew rapidly into the first city-wide organisation representing different workplaces. Despite the defeat of the strike and the consequent collapse of the soviet, it had become the recognised voice for the workers of the textile-mills. Following this example, a similar soviet emerged in the neighbouring city of Kostroma and helped inspire, in October, the formation of the Moscow Council of printing workers. As this was confined to the printing trade it did not have the universal nature of a workers' council. Bolsheviks in Moscow, trying to generalise support for the printers, called upon workers to elect delegates and convoke a Moscow Soviet. But this was not to be - at least not for two months. (9)

The workers' deputies of St Petersburg were not unaware of these precedents when they formed the most famous of the 1905 soviets, on October 13. It had a history of fifty days. Lenin spoke at one of the meetings, attended several others, but did not take any significant part. Leon Trotsky attended its second meeting and subsequently became chairman. He also became its main chronicler and wrote, in particular, the book *1905*.

Both Lenin and Trotsky saw the Soviet as being central to the process of making the revolution.

At the time Lenin appreciated its potential significance, in advance of

many of the participants:

"politically the Soviet of Workers' Deputies should be regarded as the embryo of a provisional revolutionary government" (10)

Trotsky, in the book *1905*, argued that

"we must recognise the Council (Soviet) of workers' deputies as the cornerstone of all these events..."

He was referring to the revolutionary upheavals across Russia.

"....Not only because the Petersburg Soviet served as a model for Moscow, Odessa, and a number of other cities. But above all, because this purely class - founded, proletarian organisation was the organisation of the revolution as such. The soviet was the axis of all events, every thread ran towards it, every call to action emanated from it." (11)

Gramsci, generalising from the struggles of 1919 and the occupations in Turin in 1920, emphasised that the system of factory councils was 'the beginning of a process that must lead necessarily to the founding of the workers' state. (12)

It was implicitly understood that the soviet was to be representative of the working class. Lenin argued that it must maximise its base and that soviets should attempt to represent not only all those within the working class but more than that class

"we are not afraid of so broad and mixed a composition - indeed we want it - for unless the proletariat and the peasantry unite..the great Russian Revolution cannot be fully successful" (13)

Gramsci said exactly the same; only the workers' councils could "embrace the whole spectrum of teeming revolutionary forces that capitalism throws up...". (14) Marxists perceived that workers' councils should, inevitably, be more than councils only of workers; they should stretch out to suffering humanity at large, and draw it behind their banners.



Trotsky showed how the Soviets did this.

"Some had an absolutely phantasmagorical idea of the Soviet's power and its methods. There was one blind veteran of the Russo-Turkish war, covered with crosses and decorations, who complained of dire poverty and begged the Soviet to 'put a bit of pressure on Number One', that is the Tsar"

An old cossack asked the soviet to negotiate with the Princess Reptin, who had been instrumental in sacking him, and

"the envelope containing this curious petition was addressed simply to the Workers' Government, Petersburg, yet it was promptly delivered by the revolutionary postal service" (15)

But workers' councils are to be distinguished from arbitrary collections of oppressed individuals. In organisational terms they are based upon workplaces, the deputies being directly elected by their fellow workers and accountable to them. The deputies therefore represented particular, distinguishable forces, not a mish-mash of geographical interests. Given these connections the Petrograd Soviet was able to implement decisions.

In re-telling the story of the printing of the first issue of *Izvestiia*, the newspaper of the Petersburg soviet, Trotsky tells of the manager of the printing press who raised objections to the printing of *Izvestiia*

"How do you propose to do the printing? The electricity supply is cut off"

To which the soviet representative retorted

"Which is your power station? We will get the current restored within half an hour." (16)

Significantly the writings of Trotsky, Lenin and Gramsci stressed the encompassing nature of the councils. For it to be an umbrella for all it had to be a *non-party* organisation. Lenin made this point when arguing that the Bolsheviks must become involved. (17) In 1905 Lenin argued against the sectarianism of those Bolsheviks who were only interested in

the soviets if they could be controlled by the 'Party'.

But Trotsky explained that the Soviet could mobilise people in such a way that the revolutionary organisation was

"not able to create a *living* organisational link with these masses, if only because it had always done the principal part of its work in clandestinity, concealed from the eyes of the masses. The organisation of Socialist Revolutionaries suffered from the same occupational disease of clandestinity, further aggravated by instability and impotence. Internal friction between two equally powerful factions of social democrats on the one hand, and the struggle of both factions with the socialist revolutionaries on the other, rendered the creation of a *non-party* organisation absolutely essential." (18)

Trotsky returned to the themes of unevenness and the umbrella notion of the soviet.

"Not all the toiling masses chose the Soviet; not all awakened at once; not every layer of the oppressed dared instantly believe that the revolution concerned them. In the consciousness of many only an indiscriminating hope was stirring. But all the active elements of the masses poured into the Soviet, and activity prevails in times of revolution.." (19)

The soviet should become in form an organisation with the ability to weave 'economic' and 'political' threads together. Because of the roots at the points of production, decisions about the issues of the day can be, in some way, implemented. Discussion is not just empty nor is it divorced from workers. The workers' councils are their own. When writing about the *Paris Commune of 1871* Marx and Lenin stressed the crucial importance of the integration of the differing spheres of politics and economics, of policy making and implementation.

The division between economics and politics is a typical indication of reformist influences. Other forms of reformism and opportunism take the

shape of trade union or labour bureaucracies, petty-bourgeois left intelligentsia, substitutionist and elitist political and/or religious groupings. The soviet system was by no means immune from these influences. Rosa-Levine made the point, with reference to Germany in 1918 and 1919:

"Without real knowledge of their structure, they (*the workers*) were satisfied with soviets set up by shrewd officials, chiefly members of trade unions and the old socialist parties. The soviets were crowded with people who had nothing to do with the revolution." (20)

But the difference between the soviet system and other forums is that the new power could, potentially, disband those forces which gave rise to these divisions.

Above all the Soviets represent an alternative form of power and the embryo of the future power - a dual power which co-exists with the old order. Trotsky wrote

"If the state is an organisation of class rule and a revolution is the overthrow of the ruling class, then the transfer of power from the one class to the other must necessarily create self-contradictory state conditions, and first of all in the form of dual power" (21)

So far this all too brief survey of the Marxist tradition has identified the following features:

- i) The central importance of the councils
- ii) The breadth of representation
- iii) The councils' roots in the workplaces and an ability to implement decisions
- iv) The overlap between the executive and the legislative

As part of the process of trying to determine whether there were any workers' councils in Portugal some possible characteristics have been identified and these will be considered while looking at the Portuguese experience. If organisations which share similar characteristics existed it becomes necessary to try to trace the actual impact upon the political and social structure and to see whether they did indeed form the embryo of a new society - the workers' state.

#### 4 Party and Workers' Councils

The greater part of the literature on workers' councils arises from the revolutionary tradition, one that is also trying to work out the inter-relationship party and class. It is the intention of this section to highlight differing aspects of this inter-relationship, namely

- i primacy of class over party
- ii primacy of party over class
- iii the inter-relationship of party and class.

When considering Portugal we shall see that similar strands emerge and we shall try to see whether these political positions did effect the development of workers' councils in Portugal.

At the height of the preparations for seizing power Lenin felt it necessary to write *State and Revolution* which dealt precisely with the

relationship between party, class and workers' councils.

Because of their identification with the working class some Marxists (eg Trotsky, Luxemburg) spent a great deal of effort on studying the class directly as did the Mensheviks. Libertarians such as Pannekoek stressed the prime importance of the class and its councils, which suffered at the hands of 'the party'. (22)

They attack the opposing view of those who stress the first importance of the party and its structural components. This was certainly the attitude of Bolsheviks, who fought desperately to maintain an organisation in the years of repression. Both party hard-liners (eg Stalin) and reformists such as the Mensheviks tended to equate the interests of the party automatically with the working class, and claimed therefore, that the party had licence to operate on its behalf.

Of course parties and views do not always fall neatly into these apparently opposing camps; they may be contradictory and may veer from one extremity to another. In fact the two extremes often approach each other, as in a circle. Thus, within the revolutionary tradition, Narodniks were both libertarians and elitists. Marxists reacted against the Narodniks. Nevertheless, many of the Communist parties also claimed to act for and on behalf of the class.

The third position takes into account both party and class. The relationship is dialectical. When Marxists talk about 'the party' they are emphasising the need for one party which unifies and leads the

working class. The "Party" is necessary in order to make and consolidate a revolution. They are recognising that both spontaneity and mass struggle are insufficient and also that a determined section alone cannot succeed in isolation from the working class.

The distinction between "the Party" and councils is crystal clear. A party is a section of political militants, militants who elect to act together, voluntarily united by common political beliefs. A council will contain a wide variety of political views and represent differing sections of the working class. Thus party and class are separate, and the distinction permits fine tuning of the inter-action between party and class. Permitting and ensuring are not the same things. This third position may appear to vacillate but in fact it should be pragmatic, buffeted between party and class, responding to the situation, amending the strategy and tactics and recognising mistakes. Perhaps because of its flexibility it is harder to discern in it a single definitive statement or a set of principles. In the writings of Lenin it is stressed repeatedly that politics cannot be separated mechanically from organisation. (23)

In 1905 Lenin was among the first of the Bolsheviks to recognise the central importance of the soviet, and how the party lagged behind workers on this occasion. Within the party he took up the questions of why and how the Bolsheviks should be active within the soviets, but remain as separate units with their own identity. He wrote

"The Soviet of Workers deputies or the Party? I think it is wrong to put the question in this way and that the decision must certainly be both the Soviet of Workers Deputies and the

party." (24)

He returned, time and time again, to this dialectical relationship. Although Lenin he had a far-sighted concept of the soviet he made the point that the idea was not born out of theory but came from 'the revolutionary genius of the masses', in response to what many workers were feeling and articulating instinctively. The soviets became central to his view of revolution after the February 1917 revolution. The renewal of soviets in February was not achieved with the help of Bolshevik participation. The revolutionary intelligentsia, and in particular the Mensheviks, played a significant part in arguing for the re-establishing of the soviet. Furthermore there were a number of Mensheviks in the Executive Committee.

Lenin's April theses drove home that the Bolsheviks had to work patiently and systematically with the masses and to agitate

"for the indispensable transfer of the total state power to the workers' soviets so that the masses may learn through experience" (25)

The seizure of power would not be undertaken by the party on behalf of the masses. Those who actually organised the insurrection could only do so with massive support. This support would allow the key installations to be taken and overcome any resistance. If the insurrection did not have that support then the seizure would become a coup. That is why Trotsky argued that the call for "All Power to the Bolsheviks", which stressed the organisational centrality of the party, was incorrect because it did not stress the importance of the soviets and the confidence that workers and peasants had in them.

Many have argued <sup>(26)</sup> that the reason for the collapse of the soviets after the October revolution was that the Bolsheviks did not intend the soviets to have supreme sovereignty. But Lenin had believed that, after the international Socialist Revolution the state and, therefore, the need for a revolutionary party, would wither away and that any new state would be based upon a system of Soviets. Subsequently Trotskyists argued that the soviets collapsed after the October Revolution because the very motor of soviets, the democratically elected workplace committees, had dis-integrated. Without our becoming further involved in the debate about what happened after the Russian Revolution we need to consider the pertinence of the relationship between the party and workers' council.

I do not intend to establish exhaustively that there is a definitive Marxist position on Workers Councils. It is necessary to counter-balance both the non-partyists, those who argue that the workers' councils have been neglected, and also to refute the subsequent re-writings by Soviet historians who have super-imposed a straight line of development from the Paris Commune to the Soviets of 1905, to the seizure of state power in 1917 and the Stalinist Regime. Stalin's writings of 1905, when he was based in Moscow, contain not a word about the soviets, of which there were at least forty. <sup>(27)</sup>

Lukacs discussing the relationship between theory and practice, said

"only after years of acute revolutionary conflict had elapsed was it possible for the Workers' Council to shed its Utopian, mythological character and cease to be viewed as the panacea for all the problems of the revolution; it was years before it could be seen by the non-Russian proletariat for what it really was."



Tantalisingly he continues

"I do not mean to suggest that this process of clarification has been completed. In fact I doubt it very much. But as it is being invoked only by way of illustration I shall not enter into discussion of it here." (28)

This study of embryonic soviets in Portugal attempts to examine the relationship between party and class, and I shall also return to this theme in the conclusion. The attitude of the left parties will be examined applying the criteria established in this section. Did the parties see the workers' councils as being of primary importance? Did they see 'the Party' as the main weapon of revolution and therefore think that the movement should become subsumed as an extension of the party? Or did they argue that workers' councils and the party were different but both vital and necessary to one another?

## 5 The structure of the thesis

The body of this thesis has been broken down into four parts

Introduction

Background

Case Studies

Conclusions

Although the heart of this thesis is to be found in the case studies, many other questions fundamental to the process of making a workers'

revolution have to be answered. What made seemingly ordinary workers take such extraordinary actions? What was the nature of the workers' movement? What was the relationship of factory workers with the workers in the armed forces and vice versa? What was the effect of the radical officers? How did the movement relate to the Provisional Governments and the electoral parties?

It has been necessary to write a substantial background: a guide to the more important events, and the political and social organisations that arose. Specific events are highlighted and interpreted as they arise. Thus a fairly rigorous chronological order is adhered to, despite the difficulties caused by the twists and turns so prevalent at the time. So much happened so quickly. At best we can establish the rhythms of action. Because the embryonic councils are covered in the case studies, and in order to minimise duplication, they are only pencilled in here. Therefore the background, in isolation scarcely deals with council type formations.

The background does give one the opportunity to introduce factors pertinent to the development of the selected studies. Examples include strikes, rebellion in the armed forces, workplace organisations, co-ordinating structures and the organisation of the far left. These areas have been ignored, underestimated, or misconstrued by far more comprehensive studies.

The background can be only an outline – a selection of essentials. The events which are selected and analysed relate to the workers' movement

and its organisations. Geographically the workers' movement was concentrated in the industrial region of Lisbon (which spills over into Setubal thirty miles to the south) and to a lesser extent around Porto. There is therefore not much geographical exploration, despite the fact that seasoned travellers such as returned migrants and discharged conscripts were often thrown into the leadership of struggles in the factories and the fields. (29)

Classes other than the working class are hardly referred to. A particularly important section is that of the land workers in the Alentejo, the grain growing southern province. Here the farms, predominantly large, were worked by landless day labourers, many of them casual. They had a tradition of militant struggle. By contrast the fertile soil in the north permitted intensive cultivation, along with a myriad of smallholdings owned by peasants. The north has been a bastion of support for the Catholic Church.

Many sizeable political groups are ignored at the expense of sometimes miniscule fragments from within the extreme left. Nor is there much mention of the numerous plots, intrigues and countless ephemerally famous personalities, so often mentioned in the cafes and the press of the time.

The intention is to study some sets of concrete historical circumstances. One has to look at what happened in order to formulate answers, and perhaps reformulate questions.

November 25, 1975 concludes the story. It spelt, decisively, the end of any possibility of a council movement. The conclusion suggests that an effective network of councils could have thwarted the change brought about by 25 November.

Given the scope of the study it is inevitable that there are loose ends and questions unanswered. It is not intended that this study be a defence of all the 'personal values' expressed, ideas which have been partially modified as a result of the experience and study of the Portuguese events.

The developments in Portugal took place within a wider context. Factors such as the African colonial wars and the movement of international capital crucially affected the course of events. This study does not focus upon these external factors because it is necessary to concentrate upon the development of the workers' movement within Portugal.

International comparisons with the workers' movement in revolutionary episodes, however fruitful, can only be referred to. It is hoped that the background has sketched the panorama sufficiently for the reader to look subsequently in depth at each of the four studies. They each warrant a chapter.

These studies, although in chronological order, are presented as separate episodes. They assume the reader is conversant with the background. They can be read subsequent to the reader's familiarising himself with the background or as he reaches each relevant point in the background.

In Portugal there were a number of assemblies of working people which resembled, in form at least, workers' councils. They appeared in the background. They were

the Inter-Empresas

the CRTSMs (*Revolutionary Councils of Workers Soldiers, and Sailors*);

the CDRs (*Committees to Defend the Revolution*);

the Popular Assemblies;

the Setubal Comité de Luta;

CIL (the *Cintura Industrial de Lisboa* - the network of workers' commissions in the industrial belt of Lisbon).

They attempted to harness militancy and were usually spontaneous, springing from the base.

The case studies presented here are of:-

the Inter-Empresas (May 74 - March 75)

the CRTSMs (April 75 - June 75)

the Popular Assemblies (June 75 - November 75)

the Setubal Comité de Luta (Oct. 75 - November 75)

The dates are an indication of the period covered in the case studies, usually indicating the zenith of the organisation, not the dates when the organisations formally existed. In fact the Inter-Empresas and CRTSMs continued to exist in name after these dates but were of no further significance.

In choosing the examples the three following criteria were selected:

- a) the democratic nature of the organisations
- b) the importance of the revolutionary left
- c) their potential role, as envisaged by the organisation, as an alternative form of power

Personal inclination and circumstances played a part in formulating these criteria. The application of such criteria restricts the number of case studies. The background section refers to other examples which resembled potential workers' councils. Because of the dominance of the Portuguese Communist Party, neither the CDRs nor CIL sought to replace the established order with an autonomous workers' movement; the background section expands upon some of the reasons for this. The CDRs saw themselves essentially as a means of communicating from above. They were an insubstantial force. CIL was certainly a substantial organisation, comparable at least to any of the four cases studied, and it warrants further examination. The revolutionary left, incorrectly, in my view, did not participate within CIL. It will be seen that this was, immediately prior to November 1975, an important and powerful organisation, at least comparable with the those cited in the studies. No mention has been made of the Covilha conference of factory commissions. This was, by and large, a creation of the Maoist MRPP and dominated by it. It succeeded in winning some support from sympathisers of the Socialist Party, but almost no evidence of this organisation

exists on paper, except that published by the MRPP.

This is not a comparative study of workers' councils, although some of the questions which arise, also arise out of the study of other and, in particular, the Russian experiences. It is difficult to know how strong or weak the case studies were, compared with examples from other times and countries. Such comparison, however, would take the reader beyond the conclusions.

The conclusion is in two parts. The first is at a wider level. It tries to gauge the achievement of the workers' councils nationally. By looking at the role of the armed forces, the function and failure of the popular power movement and the strength of its counterpart reformism, some conclusions can be drawn regarding the nature of the development of the workers' council movement.

At a closer level, the forms of workers' are compared, with particular regard to the salient features identified in sections three and four of this introduction.

The conclusion attempts to draw a distinction between the actual strength of the embryonic councils and their potential. The organisations managed to capture the limelight for brief moments but in retrospect they never succeeded in achieving a leading role.

6 Involvement and the Method of Research

I do not subscribe to that school which proclaims to be objective and "value free". Indeed it was inevitable that observers of the Portuguese revolution were swayed by events and passions. They took sides. Many observers were both influenced by, and wanted to influence, these events.

This observer was also a participant. Subsequent reflection still attempts to take into account the views and the passions of those who tried to transform the Portuguese Revolution into a Socialist Revolution. An understanding of the author's involvement and values and assumptions should help the reader to distinguish and interpret.

My first two-week visit to Portugal was in August 1975. A British political group, the International Socialists (I.S.), organised a cheap trip for 70 comrades on a commercial airlight. On our first night we stayed at the comfortable Hotel Ambassador which had been taken over by the workers. Naturally they gave a large discount to foreign revolutionaries. A member of the workers' commission, the telephone receptionist, told us the story of the occupation. Much of that trip was spent on demonstrations, visiting workers commissions and various *sedes* (centres) of the left. Like many other comrades I wrote a report, part of which is referred to later. While in Portugal I arranged a speaker's tour of British cities by a revolutionary worker from the famous Lisnave



shipyards.

Back in Lancashire I organised some of the meetings and helped organise support for the big demonstration of 20th of September in London, called by the Portuguese Workers' Co-ordinating Committee.

From October of that year until the following June I was employed by the International Socialists as a political organiser based in Lisbon. My terms of reference were threefold:-

- i) To write reports and articles for *Socialist Worker*, *International Socialism* and other publications. (These were written under the pseudonym 'Robin Peterson').
- ii) To liaise between the International Socialists and the revolutionary left in Portugal - in particular the PRP-BR and MES. My duties ranged from acting as a 'revolutionary tourist agent', to preparing and selling pamphlets in Portuguese. For example by the the first week of December we were selling, on the streets of Lisbon, the pamphlet "The Lessons of the 25th November", which had been translated from English.
- iii) To co-ordinate between workers' organisations in both countries. This was done under the aegis of the 'Rank and File Organising Committee'. With the backing of Cintura Industrial de Lisboa and Intersindical we organised a delegate conference on the theme of "Health and Safety in the workplace". 200 workers attended and the

conference was addressed by speakers from the British Trade Union movement. I organised the translation of a directory of toxic chemicals which was published by the Intersindical.

Others had some misconceptions about my involvement. I was not a Cuban who was trying to create an armed outpost in a factory north of Porto. I went to this factory to meet a member of the office staff who had happened to write to *Socialist Worker*. This meeting was interrupted by a visit from the whole workers' commission. They had heard this rumour about the Cuban and came to unmask me. Nor was I a member of the CIA. Although this was a common allegation I found a letter, dated 1977, addressed from the PRP to all other political groups on the left specifically warning them about my CIA involvement! In fact there was a tenuous connection. A CIA defector (Philip Agee) had done a study on 'the company's' connection in Portugal and was eager to tell people in Portugal about these connections. I was in the middle of preparing such a meeting, with delegates from all the barracks in Portugal when it had to be abandoned because of the events of November 25th.

At this time activists had little intention of recording their actions for posterity. They were too involved in various activities to record details or write diaries. More important was the production of leaflets, bulletins and wall newspapers. Many of these actors were not part of a 'literati' accustomed to expressing themselves in writing. But they loved to explain their actions. The journalist, Paul Foot, describes his meeting one of the Komite de Luta sub-committees, which met almost every night.

"When I arrived, entirely by chance, at about 11 p.m. one wet Thursday evening, repair work on the walls, floor and staircase was in full spate. Upstairs the committee was in anxious discussion. Half a dozen children were copying out lists of vegetables on large sheets of paper... In Portugal it is natural that a group of foreigners should burst into a committee meeting at 11 at night. Naturally, too, the foreigners want a discussion. Naturally they must be accommodated. We sat down and talked for two and a half hours." (30)

Comrades from fraternal organisations attended many meetings. As I was, in effect, their liaison, most of them ruminated over what they had seen with me. While most of my own rough notes still exist, the only properly recorded descriptions were those intended for wider circulation. I did, in early 1976, conduct a number of interviews with activists from the Popular Assemblies, the CRTSMs and the Comité de Luta.

In the summer of 1975 we had been to look and learn. Questions arose concerning the extent and nature of the activities that were taking place on the ground. What was the extent and nature of the organisations and did they resemble potential workers' councils? The interest in workers' councils is derived from a particular tradition. One of the problems of preparing this study has been that of trying to free the workers' council theme from a series of inter-related questions and assumptions.

The hypothesis of this thesis is that workers' councils are formations that can be identified more often than not in revolutionary periods. It is hoped that in the future the 'hypothesis' will be tested; ie the Portuguese movement will establish workers' councils. However, this study is confined to looking at what people thought was possible at the

time, and seeing what happened.

Because the idea was important, in Lisbon in the autumn of 1975 and the early months of the following year, I followed potential council type developments. Much of my familiarity with groups such as the CRTSMs and the CIL arises from that time. Although crucial the council element was not necessarily central. Focussing on workers' councils was not inevitable. There were a number of assemblies that I now greatly regret not attending but at the time there were more urgent priorities.

After I left, in May 1976, I worked for several years as a political organiser in Britain. There was not enough time nor were there resources for any substantial writing about those events. Another factor, probably, was a degree of demoralisation after the defeat of the far left.

In 1979 I returned to Portugal for 10 days, re-established contacts and submitted an outline for a thesis. I have since returned 5 times. When I restarted the investigations much time was spent trying to form an over-all picture of what happened. This has been the basis of the background chapter.

Over the years I have been fortunate in being able to acquire collections of source materials and unpublished writings. Examples include leaflets and cuttings from the old MES headquarters in Lisbon, documents and writings from various Portuguese and British activists, and, especially, materials compiled by Bill Lomax and others when they

were working on a project funded by the Ford Foundation.

In the study I have frequently used the three nouns 'revolutionaries', 'militants' and 'comrades'. They tend to be inter-changeable. If a distinction is to be drawn, a 'militant' refers to one who was active but not necessarily a revolutionary, a 'revolutionary' does not necessarily imply membership of a party (members of the PCP and Socialist Party are not normally identified as 'revolutionaries' although many perceived a need for a revolutionary party) and 'comrade' implies a fellow associate, a communist or a revolutionary socialist.

Abbreviations have been used frequently. Refer to the glossary for listing. While there is danger in creating a quantity of abbreviations, I have often resorted to using CTs and CMs to denote the workers and residents commissions. Usually the Portuguese Communist Party is called the PCP (not the CP) and, sometimes, the Socialist Party is called the PS. Portuguese abbreviations, not the anglicised versions, are used.

For technical reasons Portuguese accents have not been used. This can result in a distortion of meaning. For example the word *Força* means a 'noose' whereas the same word with a cedilla below the letter C means 'force'. The name 'Inter-Empresas' has proved troublesome because a) in its early stages it used a variety of names without using capital letters b) its various names were spelled in several ways and c) it referred to '*the meetings of the enterprises*'. I have used 'Inter-Empresas' in the plural, though strictly speaking this was only one organisation with many component parts.

While I did as much background reading as I could I then decided to return to interview possible contacts and this has been the primary source of material.

## 7 Oral Evidence

I worked with a number of those interviewed and have found that they were more than ready to tell their experiences. My selection of material has been determined by those people to whom I had ready access. Much of the research relies unashamedly on their experiences. Most of them worked in workplaces and barracks which feature in the story.

My selection is drawn primarily from those who wanted to make the revolution. While a selection could be criticised as unrepresentative, there are mitigating factors:

- i) Revolutionary politics was not confined to a tiny elite. In a situation such as arose in Portugal, politics was everywhere. These individuals were a product of their time. They expressed what others were thinking and saying.
- ii) The majority of the people I interviewed were militants and those who worked played leading roles in their workers' organisations. I have concentrated on these political activists who expressed ideas

about workers' self-activity. In many cases they were involved in building workers' council-type organisations. Of course they do not epitomise the organisations of workers (indeed the political organisations which proclaimed this epitome have been regarded with some suspicion.)

iii) There is another aspect of those interviewed. The most coherent and outward-looking of the militants in the workplaces often became political activists in what is frequently regarded as the extreme left. Although they may have started out as such, they were not members of the larger parties. They tended to be the most vociferous and articulate of the militants. As party activists, their arguments and ideas would have been practised and sharpened within the orbit of their parties. Political discussions would have had repercussions in their workplaces and political discussions in their workplaces would have had repercussions in their parties.

I deliberately wanted to incorporate views and experiences from a range of important workplaces. In the case studies some details regarding interviewees are usually provided but further details are to be found in the appendix. Interviewees include those from Petrogul, Automatica (then a branch of Plesseys), T.A.P., Lisnave, Setenave and the Construction Industry. I have also interviewed workers from a number of important workplaces, e.g. *Republica* and T.L.P., but have not drawn directly on these sources for this study. While access also depended upon luck and personal factors I was able to use networks such as a 'workers information centre' and an association set up to commemorate April 25. But I did not always obtain the access I desired to individuals. I have

also drawn upon interviews with militants who were in the army, especially the Military Police, Lumiar, Pontinha, RALIS and Caldas de Rainha.

This selection is fairly widespread in terms of the range of workplaces represented, but it is still a personal selection and affected enormously by the resources available. It was neither practical nor particularly appropriate, given the circumstances and specialised emphasis, to undertake a systematic survey.

The dangers of distortion through oral history are not to be underestimated. Facts may be blurred in course of time by later interpretations, changed opinions or simple dimming of memory. Over the years participants have modified their views. Some of their reflections have been incorporated but only when they add to the description and understanding of the events of the time. I try to compare the workers' testimonies with the factory bulletins and the newspaper reports of the time and to sift, combine and cross check. The quotations and notes from 1975 and 1976 were not recorded systematically. Most of the evidence survives only in the form of extracts from published articles. The majority of the later interviews have been tape-recorded. The recordings are either in English or in Portuguese followed by translation. Although I speak some Portuguese I am not fluent and have tried not to rely upon my own interpretation and translations. The ones which have been used in the final version of this thesis have been checked carefully by several Portuguese friends who are also proficient in English.



While a lot of the interviews were with people speaking in their own words, on occasion I would put a suggestion in order to get their reaction, or to see whether such-and-such an impression was correct, and then incorporate the question into their answers.

Recollections often proved inaccurate. At times I found that people could not remember exactly when something happened and would give an external reference to something which clearly happened earlier or later. For example, I was told by two young activists about an important incident in Setubal where barricades were set up against Socialist Party supporters going to a demonstration. A shotgun was fired. There is no doubt that the barricade was set up - in Setubal a number of barricades were organised. The cited example was undoubtedly important for those involved as was the political argument which followed regarding whether or not to prevent Socialist Party demonstrations. The question is, how did it link to the chain of events? The comrades could not remember when the barricade was organised. They said that this was an important step in the formation of the *Comite de Luta*. Actual dates of known events are often easy to determine because they appear in the press. It is probable that the incident referred to took place on the 17th of July, 10 weeks before the *Comite de Luta* was set up but, given the speed of events, was not directly related to the *Comite de Luta*. Thus we see the merging or overlapping of incidents. (31)

Sometimes people could not remember events. For example I tried very hard to interview somebody I knew who had gone to a particular meeting of the *Inter-Empresas* in order to raise the issue of 'international

sabotage' by Plesseys. Finally we made contact. She could not even remember going to that meeting.

Sometimes I was able to repeat the interview using additional references to clarify points and references. References and impressions were cross-checked with other interviews. This principle has governed the preparation of this thesis. I did not use the Setubal barricades story because I could not get any cross reference. Often we would find, even from within the same group of activists, rather different interpretations. Such differences can help obtain a clearer over-all view.

*The heat of the moment and the passion of views can distort. For example in early January 1976 (ie after the defeat of November 25th) the UDP organised a demonstration against the austerity measures of the 6th Provisional government. Their talk, echoed in some newspapers, was of a demonstration of "tens of thousands". I counted less than 4,000. Nothing is to be gained by distortions and wishful thinking. Events have to be described as accurately as possible.*

I have about one hundred hours of interviews on tape. Much of this material has not been directly used for a variety of reasons. First, some of it is in both languages and therefore wasteful. Second, a lot of the material confirms already known facts and stories. Third, much of the material consists of other facets of the Portuguese Revolution (eg the organisation of Marxist-Leninists), useful to me, but not necessarily authoritative or useful to this study.

Despite these limitations conversations and interviews have been an important source of evidence. While it was only possible to speak to six people who participated in any of the early meetings of the Inter-Empresas (only two of those interviewed have detailed recollections) there has been very little written evidence available. If there are any written records of the first informal meetings of what came to be known as the Inter-Empresas, they have yet to be unearthed. If they do come to light it is very unlikely that they will be able to provide the insights that the participants once had.

## 8 Contemporary Evidence

Misinformation, often deliberate, occurs wherever there is a revolution or a war. No doubt Portugal was an extreme example of this due in part to a tradition of ignorance and obscurantism. Those journalists who were inquisitive enough to enquire of Salazar why nothing ever seemed to happen in Portugal were informed by the great Dictator that 'happy countries have no history.' Hence there were very few studies from before April 25th. (32)

The ruling class employed a small army of civil servants, secretaries and publicists to record its debates and discussions. For example the 'official' account of November 25th, the *Relatorio*, spans two

substantial volumes. Some of the turbulence of the time managed to peep into these arid 'official' accounts, but in general they were antagonistic to workplace struggles.

The workers' struggles did not take place at the level of official public politics. Just as naval historiographies of mutinies will tend to neglect the lower decks, the accounts of the revolutionary process neglect the mass movement. This creates inevitable problems for the historian. Documentation is scanty, particularly of the months immediately following April 25th. The factory committees and embryonic councils lacked even minutes and record books. It is quite unusual to find details of such matters as meeting places, dates of meetings, regularity of sessions or even the levels of attendance and breadth of representation. Sometimes lack of precise detail makes the actions and organisations seem insubstantial, but the lack of documentary evidence is compensated for by the evidence of workers' activity. The evidence was partial, in the form of communiques from workers' organisations, minor press items and perhaps in wholly inadequate statistics. Given these weaknesses there exists a body of invaluable documentation of workplace struggles and structure, created by the academics attached to the *Gabinete de Investigações Sociais*, and those who wrote for their journal *Análise Social*.

Much of the Portuguese press adopted the flowery and abstract political language in evidence at that time. The papers were much given to verbose accounts from high-ranking (often recently promoted) military officials. As the struggle heightened, the oppressed classes controlled, for a

time, their own organs of information, epitomised by the newspaper *Republica* and the Lisbon station of *Radio Renascenca*, both of which were under workers' control in the Summer and Autumn of 1975. The daily newspapers would print, often fully, a communique from any left-wing group or an official statement from any workers' committee which managed to issue one. This evidence of the activity by the masses is extremely useful, but it is often stilted and only partial. It was all too rare that the papers, even those under workers' control, felt or sounded representative of working people. In the middle of a revolution rank-and-file activists rarely found an adequate written expression for their ideas.

Another important contemporary source of evidence was the papers produced by the left at the time. Newspapers such as *Combate* and *Poder Popular* sometimes had lengthy interviews with militants, or groups of militants involved in specific workplaces. Shortly after or during the revolutionary process quite a few accounts, collections of documents and roundtable discussions were published as pamphlets or as books, usually slim ones. (33)

Sometimes these sources manage to break through the political rhetoric and capture the imagination. But very few articles are centred upon the embryonic councils' proceedings. The left groups occasionally published pamphlets and articles which were mainly useful insofar as they presented their official record of their own contribution and view of the events. Another important, but all-too-fragmentary source, is the leaflets and documents published by the organisations themselves. I have

the first and fifth issue of the official newsheet put out by the Inter-Empresas; I have yet to find other copies. I have been able to acquire a sizeable collection of leaflets and papers over the years.

The first written evidence of one of the Inter-Empresas meetings comes several month earlier, from a publication by the PCP(ML), one of the Marxist-Leninist currents. <sup>(34)</sup> It was only after their major public action - the demonstration on September 28, 1974 - which coincided with a greater receptiveness on the part of the press - that it is possible to find references in the popular press. In addition workplace bulletins start referring to the organisation, and in particular to the demonstration of February 7th. This demonstration put the Inter-Empresas on the national map, if only for a brief period. By then the Inter-Empresas had started its own regular printed newsheet, of which I have the two issues. Because, in the case of the Inter-Empresas, there is so little written evidence I have relied heavily upon those sources.

The CRTSMs are better documented for three reasons. First they were part of a coherent strategy of a political party, a party which actively built an organisation. Hence the PRP published a lot of the materials, including a collection of documents.

The PRP/BR was well versed in the art of Public Relations. Its clandestine activities included setting off leaflet bombs and releasing a pig dressed up as Admiral Tomas, the then President, in a busy Lisbon public square. Another reason why the CRTSMs gained publicity is that their involvement with the extreme-left in the armed forces made better

news. If anything, in certain quarters the CRTSMs were over-publicised. Perhaps I am harder on the CRTSMs because in Summer of 1975, with others, I was involved in discussions and arguments about them.

Despite the ephemeral nature of the Popular Assemblies there are many references to them in the subsequently much more sympathetic popular press. Two other useful sources are the UDP's *Voz Do Povo* and *Movimento*, the '*boletim*' published by the MFA. I have a considerable amount of material in my possession from Pontinha, RALIS, Loures - in excess of 20,000 words - and Gondomar. But much is repetitive and verbose and it has not been used extensively.

Of the four studies the *Comite de Luta* is the easiest about which to gather material. In contrast to the other case studies, there is already a little material about it available in books. It developed in the period immediately preceding November 25th and was generally considered to be the strongest and most developed of the new forms of popular power. The Granada TV company broadcast a half-hour *World in Action* documentary in which the *Comite* featured prominently. An essential source document has been the study by Charles Downes, of Setubal residents' organisations and the inter-city organisations that they became involved in. (35)

Looking back, much of the reporting of the revolution - whether in the establishment or the left-wing press - was misleading. Sometimes it was distorted and, indeed, simply outrageous. Journalists and writers suddenly discovered Portugal and rushed off to write sensational reports

and convoluted analyses after the briefest of visits. John Vincent Smith was one of the few English language correspondents who was in the country on a long term basis, and he noted, in an article in the *Spectator* under the title : 'getting the facts straight', that:

"the reporting of the Portuguese scene in the British Press (and others for that matter) still leaves a lot to be desired. Consistent analysis over a period of time seems to be at a premium, while there has been a rash of ad-hoc articles from contributors whose stay in Lisbon (and nowhere else), I suspect, was a matter of hours and days..."

Vincent Smith's cautious articles were in striking contrast to the excited tone of the editorials. Interestingly, in the late summer of 1975 the *Spectator* started using articles from Robert Moss, who gleefully reported the anti-communist riots in the North and published a series of letters considering the possibility of sending 'right minded' young English volunteers to help Portuguese 'democrats' in their struggle against the 'reds'. (36)

In practice many of the commentators from overseas were eager to foresee the end. They predicted the collapse prior to SUV and the revolt of the building workers, and many other events - and were shown to be wrong by the shift and renewal of struggle, a struggle which continued after November 25th.

Books useful because they reported, in English, struggles of working people appeared during the process, were for example Antonio de Figueiredo's "*Portugal- Fifty years of Dictatorship*", (Penguin Books, 1975) and a most readable account of the coup, *PORTUGAL - The Year of the Captains* by the *Sunday Times* Insight team.



Kenneth Maxwell observed that

"After nearly half a century during which Portugal seemed totally irrelevant to the outside world, suddenly the most convoluted dispute of her smallest political faction becomes a weighty matter of absorbing interest".

He further argued

"Ideologists of both the left and right saw what they wanted to see, whereas reality most of the time was very obscure." (37)

While his point about ill-informed judgements is valid, the reason that so many observed the Portuguese 'experiment' was because it involved far more than a few members of an army clique.

Portugal 1974-75 was both a test and a melting-pot for revolutionary ideas. Students of revolution needed only refer to Portugal if they wished to illustrate arguments about ultra leftism, reformism and centrism, united fronts and popular fronts; bourgeois democracy versus workers' power, workers' control versus workers' power, peasants and landworkers, the role of students, youth and disabled, insurrection and, perhaps, above all, the politicisation of the armed forces. Despite the so-called ideological strait-jackets and also the undoubted political misjudgements, some of the writings of the British left still read well. Examples include the journal of the Portuguese Workers' Co-ordinating Committee - *Our Common Struggle*; the pamphlet *Portugal, a Blaze of Freedom* published by Big Flame; Tony Cliff's *Portugal at the Crossroads* (38) and *The Lessons of the 25th of November* by Cliff and Harman. These writings managed both to capture the momentum and enthusiasm and also to couple this within the international tradition of struggle which the Portuguese working class so spectacularly enhanced.

## 9 Subsequent Literature on Portugal

Much of the writing relevant to the formation of workers' councils is not about Portugal. Some of it has already been referred to in sections three and four. This section is mainly concerned with the literature about Portugal which might be pertinent to the study of the developments of workers' councils there.

Although there is now a considerable body of Portuguese writing covering the events between April 25th 1974 and November 25th 1975, it is not very useful for the purposes of this thesis. Written works tend to be military memoirs, journalistic interpretations and political justifications. The priorities of the authors range from military organisation to individual accounts peppered with heroes and villains.

Recently an extensive guide to the literature has appeared. Ronald H Chilcote has prepared Volume One of an annotated bibliography entitled *the Portuguese Revolution of 25 April, 1974*. It is divided into two parts - the first containing references to monographs and pamphlets and the second to articles. The work has been done in conjunction with the Centro de Documentacao 25 de Abril, located at the University of Coimbra. This centre is not as yet open to researchers but such a centre

has been long needed. The study itself is invaluable but for the purposes of this work it appeared rather late. There are a number of omissions, especially of literature that was produced at the time by the Left in Britain.

Since 1975 two books have been published in Britain which attempt to provide a general background to Portugal. The first is by Richard Robinson and is called *Contemporary Portugal*. It is packed with background structural data. (39) In recent years one other general over-all view of Portugal has been published in Britain. Tom Gallagher's *PORTUGAL - A Twentieth Century Interpretation* provides 'the best account yet of the Salazar regime.' (40)

Over the decades a relatively select group of western scholars has carried out studies on Portugal and Portuguese culture. Versed in decades of Portuguese isolation these writers appear to presuppose that Portuguese society was unique. The revolution of 1974 - accompanied by the forming of parties, mass workers' struggle, open political struggle - shattered the uniqueness. Such developments cannot be readily accounted for by such scholars. Thus we see in Robinson and Gallagher explanations of the movement in terms of 'politics of drunken soldiers in cafes' or 'the Portuguese personality' or 'the age of Aquarius' or, even, '...by November 25th most of the libido was spent and the superego began to take up its function'. (41) Tom Gallagher, when it comes to his chapter, entitled 'Entering the Age of Aquarius: Revolution in Portugal, 1974-75' provides no more than useful snippets. As Bill Lomax pointed out in a review:

"Gallagher does not once cite the *Boletim* of the MFA nor any of the left-wing journals that sought, however inadequately, to represent the aspirations of workers and peasants struggling to create a better society. He dismisses land occupations and agrarian reform as 'proof of communist expansion' - in one paragraph and without a single reference - and he condemns the MFA's cultural dynamisation campaigns in an equally offhand way." (42)

There has been a need to look specifically at the role of the MFA and to be able to draw upon the ideas and feelings of those officers. Two books in particular have proved useful. Douglas Porch's *The Portuguese Armed Forces and the Revolution*, (Croom Helm, London, 1977) gives insight into this process, but his sympathies lie with the 'moderate' officers and the Socialist Party. Ferreira and Marshall's recently published *Portugal's Revolution: Ten Years On* also concentrates upon the military. A considerable portion consists of original interviews, built around a common questionnaire. This contains a valuable collection of interviews with officers, many of the leading actors within the MFA expressed in their own words, and is the only collection of its kind in English.

Other detailed studies have been referred to for two reasons. First, to see whether their studies overlap with the case studies chosen in this thesis. Only one of these studies does. Charles Downe's PhD dissertation (*Community Organization, Political Change and Urban Policy: Portugal 1974-1976*) provides a considerable amount of material on the Setubal *Comite de Luta*.

The second reason that they are important is that any study of prototype soviet organisation must take into account extensively the local organisation from which they sprang. If there is not a vibrant

democratic process concerning basic conditions, whether they be economic, social and/or political, there can be no successful movement of workers' councils.

Nancy Bermeo's book *The Revolution within the Revolution: Workers' Control in Rural Portugal* shows how the land workers in the Alentejo were radicalised. The group does not fit into the conventional peasant category, but that of the rural proletariat. This category is, if anything, increasing throughout the world. One particular region, that of Portal, is studied in detail. Portal is the area where the Communist Party obtained 49% of the vote in the 1976 elections, its highest percentage of votes, and the Communist Party was closely identified with the land reform movement. Bermeo convincingly demonstrates that the workers were neither manipulated nor controlled by the PCP in this period.

Those committed to a 'sociology of labour' have produced a substantial and valuable selection of writings concerned with workplace organisation and labour conflicts. Take for example *O 25 de Abril E as Lutas Sociais Nas Empresas* by Maria de Lourdes, Lima dos Santos, et al (Porto 1976). Other detailed accounts include Maria de Fatima Patriarca's "Operarios da Lisnave de 12 Sept. 1974" which appeared in *Análise Social*, number 56 (1978). This school, that of the sociology of labour, concerns itself with what happened in the workplaces but underestimates the role played by individuals, specific groups and parties. This can be quite frustrating when one is trying to understand exactly who said what and why.

Outstanding amongst the academic studies now emerging from Portugal is the series on different aspects of the Agrarian Reform produced under the direction of Antonio Barreto.

The publications from the the International Conference Group on Modern Portugal have usually taken a thematic approach. Two extremely informative collections of papers are derived from meetings of this group. The first is *Contemporary Portugal - the Revolution and its Antecedents* edited by Graham and Makler (1979). The second volume *In Search of Modern Portugal*, edited by Graham & Wheeler (1983), contains a number of papers which focus on aspects relating to the working class. (Nancy Bermeo in an essay of "Workers' management in Industry", Bill Lomax's chapter "Ideology and Illusion in the Revolution" and other useful pieces by Logan, Downes and Hammond.)

Bermeo and Hammond evaluate workers' control and self-management in the light of the Portuguese experience. (43) Because tens of thousands of workers took over their workplaces, others set up co-operatives and the enormous occupation of the agricultural estates, the issue was by no means merely academic. Seemingly democratic self-management should both play an important part in the process of preparing to take power and also coincide closely with embryonic workers' councils. In practice many workers who became absorbed with problems of management tended to become divorced from events in general. Echoing the arguments of Setenave shipyard workers - one cannot have workers' control without workers' power.

There has been considerable discussion in academic circles about the nature of the Salazar regime, specifically was it fascist? Manuel Lucena, in *The Evolution of Portuguese Corporatism under Salazar and Caetano*, describes it as a form of fascism without a mass movement. Also of relevance is D Raby's chapter entitled *Populism and the Portuguese Left: From Delgado to Otelo* included in *In Search of Modern Portugal*.

Martin Kayman's *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Portugal* stresses the anti-fascist nature of the MFA. Whilst the fascist label is unavoidable this study will try to demonstrate that the MFA, by demonstrating its power to overthrow fascism, led to a disconnection between fascism and capitalism. This disconnection led ultimately to the undermining of the anti-fascist forces.

The extent of the defeat of these forces was not as bloody as in Chile or Hungary. Following November 25th 1975 only a handful died. Outside the military, only a few dozen revolutionaries were incarcerated. Nevertheless the defeat was crippling. Those few who remained active concentrated on maintaining some organisation. The vast majority dispersed - fragmented - into personal politics, into getting jobs or completing studies. They did not have the confidence nor the resources to write a history from the point of view of workplace militants. Despite the thousands of revolutionary socialists who were active in the struggle virtually no writing documenting and analysing these struggles has appeared. For many in Portugal the effect of November 25th was to debase any Marxist explanation and Marxist terms appeared empty.

In general the English-speaking revolutionary left has failed even to try to explain what happened. One of the first books to come from the left was Jean Pierre Faye's *Portugal: The Revolution in the Labyrinth*. It is a collection of articles, testimonies and documents. It includes the events of November 25th and reprints but does not attempt to assess the decisions reached at the Congress of Workers Commissions held in Covilha in September 1975.

N Poulantzas in *The Crises of the Dictatorships*, New Left Books (1976), suggests that if the military left and its civilian allies had won the battle of November 25th then they, the 'Lisbon commune', rent with internal disputes and facing civil war, would have been faced with a defeat of more serious proportions. He goes further and argues that, first, the PCP were pursuing such a strategy and second, that insurrection was doomed to failure because Portugal was not an advanced capitalist society, which meant that socialist prospects were limited.

Phil Mailer lived in Portugal prior to April 25th and throughout 1974/6. His book *Portugal: the Impossible Revolution?* (Solidarity, 1977) is an impressionistic, lively and most useful record. It is the most leafed-through book on my shelves, despite numerous inaccuracies. Mailer is a libertarian whose driving spirit is in sympathy with the oppressed. He argues that all parties and trade unions perform a disservice to the oppressed and that these organisations should be banished from the movement. Those who choose to join these organisations tend to be characterised as innocents who have been corrupted.



Jack Hammond has made a significant contribution to the literature with his recently published *Building Popular Power: Workers' and Neighborhood Movements in the Portuguese Revolution*. (Monthly Review Press 1988) His study brings together sympathetically the basic accounts and source materials in a single readable volume. He offers two models for change. The first is centralist and represents change from above on behalf of the masses. This model is epitomised by the PCP. On the other hand he identifies and sympathises with the Popular Power model, one that stresses direct action, mass involvement and change from below. He argues that the strength of the local movement was also a weakness. It could not transfer local gains to the larger geopolitical sphere nor could it confront general issues such as seizing state power. Hammond's study goes further than most in both illuminating the central role and the exciting part played by the workers' movement and asking some central questions. Few others have succeeded in doing likewise.

Hammond tries to show the real organisational strength of what happened in Portugal. He starts from the bottom examining what happened on the ground, and describes general development therefrom. This is particularly effective. Any study of embryonic Portuguese soviets has to take into account the base from which they sprang, and their connection (or lack of) within that base.

He spends some time in his introduction discussing the idea of workers' councils. But he has not paid much attention upon the four case studies referred to in this thesis. There are two references to the

Inter-Empresas, none to the CRTSMs, six to the Popular Assemblies and one to the Committee of Struggle. That there is no mention of the CRTSMs may be because their impact on the residents and workplace commissions, in terms of local action, was minimal. He referred explicitly to another aspect about the CRTSMs in a letter to me:

"they were derived from a handful of ideologically committed militants sitting around in a room discussing the ideal and necessary form of organisation of the working class" (44)

Does one dismiss activists because they joined political parties? Does one dismiss 'ideologies' because they are not directly derived from local experiences? Although Hammond does not automatically dismiss 'parties and ideologies' this study places a greater emphasis on the relationships between activists from revolutionary parties (who sat around in rooms, smoke filled, in the early hours of morning) and the events in Portugal.

## 10 Acknowledgements

This study would have been impossible without help from many people, far too many to mention individually. Some of them appear in the list of interviewees in the appendix. Special mention must also be made of Bruno da Ponte, Luis Lopes, Eduardo Duarte, Afonso da Sousa, Carlos Riberio and Maria do Carmo, who helped me enormously on my various visits. Above all I am grateful to Mauricio Levy, former international organiser of MES.

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Finally this study is dedicated to one of those comrades who were inspired by the struggles in Portugal, Phil Piatt the one-time '*barbearia* of Barreirro.' He in turn inspired many others. (45)

## Introduction – References

For the full details of the authors and publications, refer to the bibliography.

A "\*" in the reference signifies that some details of the person interviewed can be found in the 'interviewee details' section of the appendix.

- 1 Gramsci, *Selected writings 1910-1920*, page 261.
- 2 A review of the literature is to be found in sections 8 and 9 of this chapter.
- 3 Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, page 22.
- 4 Studies which contain details of particular instances, subsequent to the Russian experience, include Spriano *The Occupation of the Factories – Italy 1920*  
Bill Lomax *Hungary 1956*,  
Chris Harman *The Lost Revolution in Germany*  
*Workers Councils in Czechoslovakia*, edited by Vladimir Fisera.
- 5 *Revolutionary Rehearsals* by Barker, Birchall, Gonzalez, Robinson and Poya covers these episodes and accompanying organisational forms. It includes a chapter by this writer on Portugal, much of which is incorporated in the background chapter of this thesis.
- 6 Both Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, page 196 and Anweiler, *The Soviets*, page 14 refer to this, which is originally from Marx's *Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League*, March 1850.
- 7 Marx *Selected Works*, pages 289 & 294.
- 8 Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, page 200.
- 9 For further information refer to Anweiler, *The Soviets*, pages 40-46 and 79; Raya Dunayevskaya *Marxism and Freedom*, page 156.
- 10 Cliff, *Lenin*, Volume 1, page 164.
- 11 Trotsky, *1905*, page 104.
- 12 Gramsci, *Selected Writings 1910-1920*, page 256.
- 13 Cliff, *Lenin*, Volume 1, page 164. These quotations are from a letter in 1905, written for the Bolshevik press and rejected by the editor.
- 14 Gramsci, *Selected writings 1910-1920*, page 261.
- 15 Trotsky, *1905*, pages 223/4.
- 16 *Ibid*, page 150.
- 17 Cliff, *Lenin*, Volume 1, page 163.
- 18 Trotsky, *1905*, page 105.
- 19 Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, page 192.
- 20 Rosa Levine-Meyer, *Levine – The life of a Revolutionary*, page 59.
- 21 Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, page 209.
- 22 Anton Pannekoek, *Workers' Councils*.
- 23 E.g. speech concluding the 11th Congress of the Russian Communist

Party.

- 24 Cliff, Lenin, Volume 1, page 163; he cites Lenin *Collected Works*,  
Volume 10, page 9.
- 25 April 4 1917, Thesis Four, quoted by Anweiler, *The Soviets*, page  
154.
- 26 E.g. Maurice Brinton, Dunayevsky, C.L.R James.
- 27 Anweiler, *The Soviets*, pages 47 and 86.
- 28 Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, page 297, dated September  
1922.
- 29 Refer to Bermeo, *The Revolution within the Revolution*, page 93.  
Brettel also discusses the political effects of emigration in  
Northern Portugal.
- 30 Article by Paul Foot, *New Statesman*, 19/12/75.
- 31 Mota, *A Resistencia*, page 57.
- 32 E.g. Luis Salgado de Matos, *Investimentos Estrangeiros em Portugal*.  
Fryer and Pinheiro *Britains Oldest Ally*.
- 33 Examples include: the *Jornal da Greve*, a collection of bulletins  
distributed between 8/7/74 and 8/7/76 by the workers of Efacec-Inel  
and used in the Inter-Empresas case study; the interview with  
members of secretariat of SUV *Os SUV em Luta* used in the background  
section chapter on SUV; *A Revolucao num Regimento - a Policia  
Militar em 1975* interviews with rank and file members of the  
Military Police, which is referred to in the CRTSMs chapter.
- 34 *A Verdade*, Year 1 number 4, 3/9/74.
- 35 Downes, *Community Organisation, Political Change and Urban Policy:  
Portugal 1974-76*, available as a PhD.
- 36 John Woollacott makes these points about the foreign press in his  
yet-to-be completed PhD dissertation.
- 37 Maxwell, 'The Thorns of the Portuguese Revolution', *Foreign  
Affairs*, 1976, page 262.
- 38 *International Socialism*, 81/82, September 1975
- 39 Richard Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, published in 1979 by  
George Allen and Unwin.
- 40 Gallagher, *Portugal a Twentieth Century Interpretation*, published  
in 1982 by Manchester University Press.
- 41 Richard Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, page 136.
- 42 Review by Lomax in *Hispanic Review*, July 1986.
- 43 Nancy Bermeo in an essay of "Workers' management in Industry",  
Graham & Wheeler, *In Search of Modern Portugal*; see also Jack  
Hammond "Workers Control in Portugal: the Revolution and Today", in  
*Economic and Industrial Democracy*, no 2 Nov. 1981.
- 44 Hammond, letter to this writer, dated 20th of May, 1989.
- 45 Phil Piatt died of cancer in June 1989, shortly after I wrote the  
dedication to him. Although he never finished his apprenticeship as  
a hairdresser he put it to good use when visiting the PRP *sede* in  
Barreiro in the summer of 1975.

## THE BACKGROUND

- 1 Before 25 April 1974
- 2 The MFA and the April Coup
- 3 The Carnival
- 4 The PCP & Intersindical
- 5 28 September 1974
- 6 The Revolutionary Left
- 7 The Rising Struggle
- 8 11 March 1975 and the Elections
- 9 Popular Power
- 10 Reaction and Resistance
- 11 SUV - Soldiers United Will Win
- 12 The Crisis Intensifies
- 13 25 November 1975 - The Turning Point

Before entering into the discussion of the events of 1974/5 it is useful to have a brief outline of the historical background to the development of the dictatorship in Portugal.

The Portuguese monarchy was overthrown in 1910. During the next 16 years there were 45 governments, incessant bombings, assassinations, coups and attempted coups, mutinies, riots, strikes and lockouts. This period of parliamentary rule was terminated by a coup in 1926. Antonio de Oliveira Salazar was appointed Minister of Finance in 1928. He built around himself a mass movement, a party and the ideology of the *Estado Novo* (the New State). Within years he was to establish a dictatorship. Under this regime a handful of private empires flourished. Protected by tariffs and state controls two giant corporations emerged, CUF and Champalimaud. CUF grew to control one tenth of Portugal's industry, had a virtual monopoly of tobacco and a large share in the soap, chemicals, textiles and construction industries and in insurance. Champalimaud was involved in insurance and, later, tourism and came to acquire a virtual monopoly of steel production. These native conglomerates were deliberately fostered against foreign competition. Even *Coca-Cola* was prohibited. The regime bred an oligarchy - a few powerful families and their business empire, intertwined with the state bureaucracy and the upper echelons of the armed forces. In the shadow of the oligarchy there was a large number of small craftsmen and traditional firms but little

room for independent capitalism. Political parties, trade unions and strikes were outlawed. Opponents were arbitrarily imprisoned and tortured by the notorious secret police, the PIDE.

Although the Salazar regime has been commonly identified by those on the left as fascist, it was a different form of fascism from that of Germany and Italy. Salazar did not come to power through mobilising sections of the masses against communism. Furthermore, by comparison, Portugal was still largely underdeveloped. The regime was labelled fascist both by its enemies and by the population. It is important to realise the strong anti-fascist dimension of the popular power movement before and after the overthrow of the regime.

By the late 1960's Portugal had three distinctive features.

First it was the least developed country in Western Europe. It had a large peasantry in the north, landed estates in the south and relatively small, concentrated industrial centres around Lisbon and along the North Coast in the Porto region. Between 1960 and 1970 emigration, a response to underdevelopment, underwent a five-fold increase. Social provisions were archaic. The population actually declined in the last years of the sixties.

Second Portugal having acquired the first of the European colonial empires, clung to it long after other nations had relinquished theirs. The African and Far Eastern colonies provided both a source of cheap raw materials and secure, protected markets for Portugal's industrial goods.



But by the 1960's, anti-colonial uprisings began to weaken the empire. In Africa, freedom struggles began with an urban uprising in Luanda, Angola in 1961. Guerrilla movements emerged in Guinea in 1963 and Mozambique by 1964.

Third Europe's oldest dictatorship needed to re-organise and modernise its industry. New developments like the gigantic shipyard complexes of Lisnave and Setenave were financed with the help of foreign capital. In search of cheap labour and a friendly regime, the multinationals such as Timex, Plessey, Ford, General Motors, ITT and Philips set up large modern plants, mostly in the Lisbon industrial belt. The urban working class grew along with the shanty towns. Foreign capital reached 52.2% of Portugal's total manufacturing investment in 1968.

By the end of the sixties Portuguese Fascism was an archaic social system fighting a war which could not be won. The ramshackle Portuguese empire proved incapable of modernisation without a fundamental political overhaul.

Thanks to the collapse of a British-made deckchair in September 1968, Salazar suffered a stroke and severe brain damage. His withdrawal from politics encouraged those who were attempting to reform the system from above. Salazar's successor, Marcello Caetano, introduced the so-called *primavera*, the 'Spring' of liberalisation. Censorship was relaxed. Political prisoners were allowed exile and some exiles were allowed home. The student movement emerged, encouraged by liberalisation and inspired by the students in Europe and the United States. Students who

failed their exams could be conscripted into the armed forces, and the movement identified with the anti-colonial struggle in Africa.

Tightly controlled elections were held in October 1969. During the campaign an electoral front of Communists, Catholics and prominent 'left' intellectuals called the CDE - the Democratic Electoral Commissions - was formed. The CDE was to be an important forum for anyone who opposed the regime.

The 'new Spring' allowed the trade unions to run internal elections without first submitting lists of candidates to the secret police (PIDE). In 1969 and 1970 elections took place in 5 unions. Fresh blood was brought in. The textile union for example appointed a student militant as its organiser. By October 1970 there were 20 or so unions with independent elected leaderships who convened a semi-legal federation called the Intersindical.

The rise of the student and workers' movement, the drain of the colonial wars, and economic crises, combined to alarm the regime. By the early seventies Caetano had returned to traditional conservatism and repression. There was no room for reforms when a war was being fought and when nearly half of central budget expenditure went on the armed forces.

But the workers' movement could not be simply pushed back. Caetano had introduced a law of Collective Contracts which resulted in an annual round of wage negotiations. As a result, in the textile union there was

a strike every year from 1970-73. Short-lived spontaneous strikes also took place in a number of sectors.

A new strike wave broke out in the last three months of 1973. The files kept by the Ministry of Corporations and Social Security describe in detail the agitation in a sample of 33 firms in the greater Lisbon area (in commercial aviation, metalwork, clothing manufacturers, building industry and transport) involving some 17,000 workers out of a total of 30,000 employees in these firms. It was estimated that from October 1973 to March 1974 more than 100,000 workers from about 200 firms put in for wage increases and about 60,000 resorted to strike action. Outside Lisbon strikes occurred in Braga and Covilha (textiles), Porto and Aveiro (engineering) and in Marinha Grande (glass industry). Because of fear of repression strike committees often were not elected or organised. In some cases the workers did not even define their demands. They simply said they wanted an increase in wages. Where there were militant unions (e.g. textiles, electrical, bankworkers and engineering) the strikes were integrated into the framework of their activities. Other forms of action included go-slows (Siderurgia, Lisnave), street demonstrations (insurance workers and bank workers), factory gate meetings (Casa Hipolito, Soda Pova), overtime bans and the presentation of lists of grievances. (1)

The first major industrial conflict was in 1973 and involved the maintenance engineers at TAP, the Portuguese airline. Some occupied a Boeing 707. On 12 July two of these workers were shot and wounded by the police during eviction. A workers' committee, one of the first in

Portugal for several generations, was formed.

"The Police beat up a lot of people. The Strike lasted for 15 days. It was a very well organised strike. A comunicado was produced every day, signed by a 'group of workers'. . . Workers from different parts of the factory met in each other's houses. About 150 were involved with the clandestine organisation of workers inside. The interplay of the clandestine and the legal struggle enabled them to succeed in the strike. Not only did they win their wage demands they succeeded in releasing those imprisoned, the wounded were compensated and those forcibly dismissed re-instated." (2)

The workers at TAP, at Lisbon airport, were politically influenced by an emerging left. By 1972, within the CDE which had originated as an electoral front, arguments were developing around the use of violence, semi-legal political action and democracy within the organisation itself. In 1972 a crucial split took place where about a third to one half of the militants - 40 or 50 people - left the CDE. Those who left became prominent members of many of the (non-Maoist) revolutionary groups and the kernel of the Socialist Party which was founded in exile in 1973. (3)

The PCP had long claimed to be the only political organisation active in the working class struggles under fascism. Their leader Alvaro Cunhal was fond of reminding others that he

"and many other comrades who are still alive, participated in the preparation of the organisation and development of the strike of May 8th and 9th, 1944 (in Lisbon and the Lower Ribatejo)" (*Avante* 22/11/74)

Despite this legacy the strikes of 1973 far exceeded the PCP orbit. Unable to influence the massive outbreak of strikes the clandestine PCP paper, *Avante*, sought to link it to the strategy of the Party, and to represent it as part of an anti-fascist political offensive. This connection was tenuous. The evidence is that the strikes were immediate

demands based on material needs. While undoubtedly the workers hated the regime they did not have the confidence to move directly against it.

Although it seemed clear that neither revolutionaries nor the working class would overthrow the regime in the foreseeable future these forces were given a massive boost by events in Africa.

## 2     The MFA and the April Coup

General Antonio de Spínola, with his monocle and swagger stick, had been built up by the press as a war hero. Spínola had fought for Franco in the Spanish Civil war and, as an 'observer', alongside the Nazis on the Russian Front. The general, a former governor of Guinea and director of the Champalimaud group, expressed the growing discontent within the establishment in a book called *Portugal and the Future*. It had been published by a subsidiary of CUF; both CUF and Champalimaud were pressing for entry into the EEC and for a neo-colonial solution in Africa. Business interests were shifting away from the empire, and towards the EEC, and political strategy favoured in ruling class circles increasingly reflected this shift.

Caetano wrote in his memoirs

"On 18 February, I received a copy of *Portugal and the Future* with a kind dedication from the author..... when I closed the book I had understood that the military coup, which I could sense had been coming, was now inevitable." (4)

However Caetano saw as the threat Spínola and his associates, rather than the junior officers who were to form the Armed Forces Movement, the MFA. He did not yet understand how deeply the interminable colonial wars were undermining confidence and ultimately the political loyalty of the army's middle ranks to the regime.

There was no prospect of winning the wars. By early 1974 the PAIGC in Guinea was on the verge of victory and FRELIMO - the front for the liberation of Mozambique - had opened a new offensive. The number of Portuguese dead, 13,000, was greater than in any conflict since the Napoleonic wars. The Army was being blamed for these failures. Some officers were ashamed of wearing their uniforms in the streets of Lisbon.

Meanwhile a shortage of trained officers led to a decree, in July 1973, enabling conscripted officers with only short service records to be promoted alongside regular officers. Faced with a barrage of hostility the government published a second decree guaranteeing the seniority of officers above the rank of captain. This incensed the more junior officers.

On Sunday the 9th of September, amid stringent security precautions, 136 officers, none more senior than captain, met deep in the countryside ostensibly for a 'special farmhouse barbecue'. This was the first meeting of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA).

The MFA, most of whose members had served in Guinea, now set up an

organising committee. On March 16th the MFA was implicated in a botched coup attempt but the regime shrank from harsh measures and transferred most of the leaders to other units, where they continued agitating. By April 1974 the MFA had built a network of 300 supporting officers from all three services and had drafted its first programme calling for '*Democracy, Development and De-colonialisation*'.

At that time only a few of the officers could have been labelled 'socialist'. There is no evidence of any connection between the MFA and the African Freedom Fighters, the Communist Party or the Revolutionary Left. The MFA wanted a democratic modern 'mixed economy' on the Western European pattern and it refused to accept blame for colonial reverses. Such a standpoint was consistent with the class background of these officers. Yet in the context of authoritarian Portugal the demand for '*Democracy, Development and De-colonialisation*' was inevitably subversive. It made a clash with the regime inevitable.

On the 25th of April 1974, at 25 minutes past midnight, the Catholic *Radio Renascenca* played a song called *Grandola Vila Morena*. This was the signal for the start of the coup.

The first act of the coup had already occurred. Under Otelo de Carvalho, the entire engineering regiment at the fortress of Pontinha, on the North edge of Lisbon, had revolted and occupied its own barracks. From this command post he directed the coup. Carvalho's main purpose at the time was to re-establish the prestige of the Army and of the Armed Forces. Earlier photographs show him weeping at Salazar's funeral. But

Carvalho was to play an important role in the development of the revolution.

The coup itself succeeded with remarkable ease. A dozen military units were mobilised. The radio and TV stations, the airport and the general military headquarters were taken, with little resistance. Only four people were killed - shot by terrified *PIDE* agents. A regime that had lasted nearly fifty years crumbled totally in less than a day. (5)

The MFA leadership was extremely unclear and nervous about the consequences of this sudden collapse. On April 25:

"A young peasant soldier standing guard on a Lisbon street corner was asked by a middle-class passer-by what he was doing there; he replied that he had been ordered to keep an eye on insurgent troops. Upon being told, 'but you are the revolutionaries!' he shouted to a colleague: 'Manuel, we are the rebels - *VIVA*'. (6)

The MFA did not intend to govern the country, even on a temporary basis. Motivated by a concern for respectability and rank, the co-ordinating committee of the MFA called for a Junta, comprising a group of eminent soldiers headed by General Spínola, to take on the leadership. This Junta in turn set up the first Provisional Government.



3 The Carnival

At first public reaction to the coup was cautious. Many rushed out to stock up with petrol and groceries. Parents kept their children indoors. But soon workers, peasants, women and youngsters went tentatively into the cafes and streets to see what was happening. Crowds gathered in the main squares in Lisbon:

"Troops come towards us. What will happen? They raise their fingers in a V (*for Victory*) sign. The crowd cheer like I've never heard cheers before. I'd heard crowds shout in anger, but this was joy, unmitigated." (7)

Just as the reaction of the population was at first hesitant the MFA itself was tentative in approaching the population. Its first consideration was the organisation of the coup. Nevertheless the MFA had mutinied. It sought a social base to legitimise its position. It needed mass support. This was expressed in terms of collaboration across the classes. The slogan "The MFA is with the people, the people are with the MFA" soon gained enormous popularity. Red carnations were immediately adopted as the symbol of the revolution, red for the revolution and flowers for peace. Soldiers stuck carnations in their rifle barrels. By the end of the day the tanks were swarming with joy-riders.

Demonstrators attacked the hated secret police, the PIDE. Bemused soldiers saved PIDE agents from being lynched. Demonstrators caught the train to Caxias Prison (the station master let them on free) and welcomed the release of 74 political prisoners. In all, 200 political

prisoners were released and about 100 PIDE agents imprisoned.

Street and bridge names were changed. The walls blossomed with graffiti, slogans and posters and, later, with brilliant murals. May Day was declared a national holiday. The days before May Day became a permanent 'festival of the oppressed'. Even the prostitutes of Lisbon organised. They campaigned to sack the pimps and offered their services half-price to all ranks below Lieutenant.

The coup released a host of popular energies and aspirations. On 29 April more than 100 families living in the shanty towns occupied a new government housing-project on the outskirts of Lisbon. In the next two weeks more than 2,000 houses were occupied around the country. The movement of residents commissions and shanty dwellers was to come to the boil, simmer and boil over the next eighteen months. <sup>(8)</sup>

Although the MFA was later to develop the claim that it was the motor of the revolution, Melo Antunes of the MFA perceived the real engine.

"a few hours after the start of the coup, on the same day, the mass movements began. This immediately transformed it into a revolution. When I wrote the Programme of the MFA, I had not predicted this, but the fact that it happened showed that the military were in tune with the Portuguese people." <sup>(9)</sup>

On the day of the coup only one factory was actually on strike, the Mague metallurgical factory, with two thousand workers. Their demand for 6000 escudos (£100) as a monthly minimum was immediately conceded by the management, who feared the consequences of being branded as fascists by Portugal's new rulers. The Junta, however, was unhappy about this victory and declared that the new pay deal was an example which should

not be followed. (10)

After 25 April most workers did go to work, but they spent those days celebrating. Celebrations quickly hardened into battles. Managements wanted to restart production but the workers wanted the 'revolution' to be carried into the workplaces. Managements resisted, workplaces erupted. The eruptions were not co-ordinated. Demands varied enormously. Both economic and political demands were raised. Some strikes lasted a few hours and others, months. The disputes were mainly in the newer industries (electronics, shipyards, etc) and newly expanded parts of older industries (textiles, construction).

Wage claims sprouted haphazardly. One participant in a dispute recalled a meeting early in May, organised by women in the textile industry

"There were some 7 or 8000 people there. Everything was completely confused. Somebody shouted should we ask for a rise of 3,000 escudos. From across the hall the answer was no...4,000. Then no ..5,000 escudos." (11)

Workers at the Timex watch factory, predominantly women, went on strike for wage increases and the purging of six PIDE informers. They sold the watches in the streets to bolster their strike funds. On May 13 1,600 miners at Panasqueira struck for a minimum wage of 6000 escudos a month, free medical care, an annual bonus of a month's wage (known as the 13th month payment), one month's holiday and the purging of fascists. Within a week they had won all they had asked for. On 15 May Lisnave's 8,400 workers occupied their shipyards and went on strike for a 40-hour week and a 7800 escudo (£130) monthly minimum wage. In May at least 158 workforces were involved in fierce confrontations, including 35

occupations. In four of these members of management were held prisoner. (12)

In the big companies, especially the multinationals, economic demands accompanied demands for the purging of all members of the management with fascist connections. In some places this meant 'the sacking of them all.' (13) This ousting of fascists was known as *saneamento*. Very quickly it spread beyond outright collaborators and came to include anybody who was opposed to the workers. *Saneamento* occurred in more than half the firms which employed more than 500 people, revealing both the weakness of the management and the growing confidence of the workers. Although workers did not make the distinction at the time, *Saneamento* was highly political and could easily lead to questions about where real power lay. It distinguished those who controlled the factory from those who should control it. At the end of the Second World War a similar process, *Epurazione* and *Epuration*, occurred in Italy and France.

Seven monopoly groups dominated the economy. This is reflected by the fact that 0.4 per cent of all companies held 53 per cent of capital. (1971 estimates). Typically a monopoly group controlled a bank, an insurance company, a newspaper, and several diversified manufacturing firms. At the same time there were thousands of almost medieval workshops. In 1972 two-thirds of all firms produced only 12 percent (by value) of industrial output. By contrast Portugal also had some of the largest and most modern workplaces in Europe, the Lisnave and Setenave plants being prominent examples. But many multi-nationals were attracted by the prospects of cheap labour and employed, women in particular, as

unskilled and low-paid workers, especially in the electrical and textile industries. Most of this production was integrated into an international assembly and marketing operation. Its products did not appear on the Portuguese market. (14)

Figures for 1970 show that 36.7% of the working population was employed in industry and another 33.5% in the services sector. (15) This working population was highly concentrated. The vast majority of workers was to be found either around the Lisbon industrial conurbation or the area between Porto and the coast. (16) So when 200,000 workers from the Lisbon region struck in May, other workers could readily learn from them and support each other. (The converse problem was the isolation from other regions.)

Before April 25 clandestine workers' committees existed very briefly at the moment of conflicts under various names. Following the coup workers commissions rapidly emerged. Organisational forms, however, were extremely fluid. Often they were called 'Comissaos Ad Hoc'. Even at proletarian Lisnave, during the May strike of 1974:-

"Things were not then properly organised. It was more or less 'you and me let us do something'. Only later on was there a proper process of elections based upon workplace sections" (17)

By the end of May 1974 workers' commissions, councils and committees had been formed at almost all workplaces in the Lisbon region. They usually evolved the name *Comissaos de Trabalhadores* - CT's. The workplace was the basis for organisation. It has been estimated that between May and October 4000 workers' commissions (CTs) were

established. Virtually every workplace set one up, almost always following mass meetings (*plenarios*). They were the unifying force in the workplace - workers in factories of 150 workers could be members of as many as twenty unions. Air pilots and ship navigators were in the same union.

During May many militants ignored the unions, regarding them as little more than empty shells, remnants of the fascist regime. Sometimes the CTs emerged in conjunction with union committees. Very occasionally, for example in some textile factories, workers belonged to a single union, and the union committee was, in effect, the CT.

The workers' commission may have lacked formal organisation but the high level of struggle forced them to meet and consult frequently. They were highly democratic. The commission at Plessey included 118 workers - all of whom insisted on going to the first meeting with the management. (18)

Workers quickly learnt from and supported each other. Inter-factory (*inter-empresa*) meetings were held. One young woman assembly worker from Plesseys, a member of her workers' commission recalled:

"it was said 'why should we be on our own if other people (across the road) had the same problems?' Then we decided to join, and to discuss things in general. Workers from practically all the factories of the Margem SUL - (South Lisbon conurbation, on the far side of the Tagus Estuary) - were there. The meetings were a place, a way, for people to meet and discuss. The main purpose of these meetings was to defend the revolution!." (19)

Although there is very little written evidence these inter-factory meetings were embryonic and not dissimilar from workers' councils which

emerged in other countries in revolutionary periods.

In the first weeks of the revolution, the army, including senior officers, was very popular. The meeting of women textile workers, previously mentioned, was interrupted by

"a soldier who was completely pissed out of his mind asking for a whip-around for soldiers because he wanted another drink for himself and his mates."

The chairman of that meeting, a union activist, remembered

"I told the soldier to piss off. The bloke went. The people in the hall were outraged by my treatment of the soldier. I would have been lynched if I had not explained that I was an officer. I was in civilian clothes. At that time the military could do no wrong - soldiers were looked on as saints." (20)

#### 4 The PCP and the Intersindical

On May 15 the First Provisional Government was formed. The popularity of the Armed Forces was to be exploited by the Junta and the Provisional Government. In its first 10 days it was only the personal intervention of MFA officers which persuaded the workers at places like Lisnave and ITT to go back to work. However effective such intervention a strategy for defusing the workers' movement had to be developed. This hinged on the establishment of a government of 'national unity' in which the interests of all classes - including the working class - could be said to be represented. Accordingly the Socialist Party, which at the time had only 200 members and was less than a year old, was given three

cabinet ministers in the first Provisional Government. Spínola felt the communists would be less dangerous in the government than against it. So a communist party participated in a government for the first time in Western Europe since the postwar period. Alvaro Cunhal, the long-serving secretary of the pro-Moscow PCP (Portuguese Communist Party), became Minister without Portfolio, while the other communist in the government, Alvino Gonçalves of the bank workers' union, became Minister of Labour.

The PCP had a respected tradition of opposition to Fascism. It proudly proclaimed that its 247 candidates for the April 75 elections had served 440 years behind bars between them. <sup>(21)</sup> Over the years the party had developed a cadre and organisation with, perhaps, 5000 members by 25 April 1974. The PCP was the only party with a substantial base and some influence in the working class, including the militant landworkers of the Alentejo.

On the 25th the PCP was telling people to support the MFA. The MFA desperately needed a power base outside its own ranks amongst the workers. Spínola and his friends amongst the bourgeoisie believed the PCP had this base. It suited the PCP to remind everyone of (and exaggerate) these connections. The PCP wished, too, to consolidate its own position. It was not interested in further revolution. So it fostered an alliance with the MFA, to which it was to stick to like a limpet. Like other Communist Parties, such as the South African, it had developed a stages analysis. The first task was to develop an *all-class* alliance to establish a bourgeois democratic framework within which it would be able to extend its influence and win positions. This led to its



promoting the Socialist Party as a prospective 'left' ally. But it also meant the rejection of any idea that a socialist revolution could be achieved in 'backward' Portugal because it presupposed that the country's industrial base had to be built up first. Thus the PCP constantly pointed to the 'the crises of production' and exhorted workers to 'save the national economy'. As partner in the Provisional Government the PCP immediately played its main card, that of influence over the workers' movement. It had to distance itself from the wildcat strikes and the accompanying CTs (over which, in reality, it had little influence). Within a month the most established 'revolutionary' party of the workers viciously attacked the workers' commissions and accused them of being 'ultra-left', 'playing the game of the right', 'lackeys of the bosses'. Many leading activists in the CTs left the PCP as a result. Swamped by the spontaneous militancy of the rank and file, the PCP, for the time, lost much of its influence in the workers' struggles. Those places where the PCP had influence were characterically less militant.

On May 25 the government conceded a national minimum wage of 3,300 escudos a month and froze all salaries over 7,500 escudos per month. Four days later the government sacked about 1000 company directors implicated in patronage by the old regime. The strike wave faltered - momentarily. On average wages rose by 30%.

*Avante* (7/6/74) explained the apparent ebb in the strike wave:

"The right to strike is such an important conquest that it cannot be abused in an irresponsible manner. The great majority of workers have already understood this;...whenever necessary there are other forms of struggle. Without resorting to the strike, the workers have been able to win important

demands in the domain of wages and working conditions, in Sorefame, Cometna, Tudor, Metal, Parque de Alverca, Covina, Previdente, Fimma, Eurofil, Mec and UTIC as well as many other firms in the region."

The same issue carries reports on wage struggles in 2 electronics factories, where, according to *Avante*, we see the right way and the wrong way to carry out the struggle.

"The workers of Applied (Magnetics), with the Commission of Unity in their confidence, were successfully exhausting the various forms of struggle-expositions, assemblies, demonstrations, small work stoppages - for the satisfaction of their demands. And fundamentally these demands have been satisfied..."

On the other hand, the workers of ITT prematurely launched themselves into a strike, allowing themselves to be dragged along by a small group of pseudo-revolutionaries and without a really representative Commission of Unity. After 9 days on strike the employers did not respond to their demands."

Although the unions had now become legalised and it was possible to transform or manipulate them, they had insufficient authority within the workplaces. In response to the proliferation of the CTs the PCP had to resurrect Commissions of Unity. These had been set up as clandestine groups during the dictatorship but had mostly disappeared. Basically, after April 25th, they were intended to be representative organisations which embraced all the employees of the firm, i.e. from production workers to middle management. These commissions were only intended to be interim bodies and to function as long as the 'struggle' lasted. In practice they never took off but helped give rise to the Commissions of Union Delegates which were co-ordinated by the different unions.

The workers had been used to striking without unions. According to Antero Martins, a leader of the Intersindical

"In the time of fascism the strike was forbidden. Nevertheless,

the workers always resorted to the strike, in the factories, without the control of the unions, to the extent that the unions could not give the slogans of the strike. This meant that the workers were used to struggling without the unions. Now, there has been a strike wave that the unions in their great majority, have not been able to control, and cannot control because all the slogans are given by the forces of reaction or by individuals of the extreme-left, therefore left-opportunists." (22)

The PCP was putting its resources into an alternative power base - the unions. The takeover of unions was often achieved in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour. In some cases, but by no means always, the unions were empty shells.

Unions did not have money to pay officials. PCP militants went to work full time in them. Some had been recently released from prison and were looking for work. Others went on indefinite holiday from work. Many were paid by the party. Most of the leaderships of these unions were not elected but established by those who had occupied the union offices.

The Intersindical had emerged in 1970 as a loose conglomeration of relatively independent unions ready to fight for better conditions, wage increases, and union recognition. On April 25 there were 22 unions in the Intersindical. Although only a small fraction of the quasi-unions, it represented the most independent and active unionists. No one political organisation dominated it but the influence of the revolutionary left, in particular that of MES, had been important. This was to change within weeks.

Within this short time the number of affiliations to the Intersindical rose from 22 to about 200 unions and the Intersindical was dramatically

transformed into the national trade union umbrella organisation with the PCP gripping the handle. It occupied the headquarters of the former labour organisation FNAT. These initials stand for 'National Federation of Joy at Work' which speaks much of its origins. Intersindical to some extent adopted FNAT attitudes. On the first of June it organised an anti-strike demonstration. *Avante* weighed in with a warning to workers to avoid 'reactionary manoeuvres to promote industrial unrest'. Although the demonstration was a disaster, (Mailer claims less than 500 people whilst *Avante* claimed 10,000) this was an indication of the kind of political transformation being wrought within the Intersindical.

The extension of this strategy was to set up Commissions of Union Delegates in factories. In a great many factories these commissions did not exist or had a very ambiguous role as the members of the commissions did not represent the workers. There was a crucial clash of organisations, on the one hand the CTs elected by the workers in the assemblies, and on the other the union delegates. In a number of struggles the union delegates were not elected by the workers, or indeed may not even have worked in the factories. Delegates were sent to try to take over the direction of the struggle, usually with the intention of sending the workers back to work if they were on strike, and to establish negotiations with the employers. There were some firms where the unions attempted to replace the CTs elected in assemblies. Many employers were prepared to give their support to these tactics. But they were no lasting solution for the unions and were frequently counter-productive. Afterwards Alvaro Rana, a member of the secretariat of the Intersindical since 1973, explained that there was a lack of

trained functionaries and no organisation capable of responding to the demands that sprung up in the factories. (23) In some instances the corruption of the unions forced activists in the CTs to try to democratise their unions and try to change their direction.

With the subsiding of the first strike wave the inter-factory councils (inter-empresa) faltered and nearly disappeared. But the workers' commissions (CTs) in the factories and residents' commissions (CMs) in the shanty towns and occupied housing projects remained. The strikes began again in June and the Government had to recognise the CTs; even if only as temporary organisations. The PCP and the unions, worked together attacking strikers. Their tirade was particularly against those strikes which affected members of the public.

The government decided to make an example of strikers. It chose the postal workers employed by CTT - a group who could not seriously disrupt industrial production. Instead of 6000 escudos the government offered 4,300. A thousand workers had met on the 5th of May and elected a 'trade union commission' - outside the orbit of the Intersindical - to handle the pay claim. This in turn elected a 'national strike commission' which actually ran the dispute. 25,000 postal workers went on strike from June 17th. The strikers set up picket lines, organised medical and social aid for the hardest-hit families and prepared leaflets for other workers to explain their case.

The PCP and the Intersindical criticised these strikers, who "were attempting to become a privileged group at the expense of the mass of

the population".

On June 19 the government gave the order to call in the army against the postal workers. Faced with this threat a tense meeting of the 260 strong strike committee called off the strike, and secured gains of only 80 to 100 escudos per month. The CTT strikers published a manifesto which was a detailed defence of their actions and bitterly attacked the PCP. A number of PCP members tore up their party cards in disgust and joined the rapidly expanding revolutionary left - in particular the MRPP and, to a lesser extent, the PRP.

Two army cadets, one of them a member of MES, had refused to participate in the mobilisation against the CTT strikers and were imprisoned. Far Left groups organised a demonstration in their support. This was the first of many occasions when the rank and file came into conflict with military orders.

By contrast the Socialist Party had conspicuously supported the strike and stressed the democratic (ie non Stalinist PCP) organisation. By doing so it enhanced its reputation as 'democratic' and 'left wing' - which proved important later.

The dispute was an isolated victory for the Provisional Government and the MFA discovered that the tap of revolution, once turned on, was difficult to turn off. The Government was also being torn apart by the issue of decolonialisation. Its instability was reflected by the growing flight of Portuguese and foreign capital. It fell on July 9th, 1974.

The first Provisional Government had never exerted decisive control over policy. Effective authority had been shared between three centres of power - the Junta, the co-ordinating committee of the MFA and the Provisional Government itself. Given the enormous prestige of the army and the weakness of the parties which comprised the Provisional Government, the 'government' was probably the least powerful of these bodies. But between the top generals of the Junta and the middle-ranking officers there lay important differences.

The Junta was concerned primarily with maintaining the established political and economic system, with the cohesion of the army under its command and with engineering an 'orderly' transference to a neo-colonial solution in Africa. The MFA included officers who had no permanent stake in the system and were hostile to the old political elite which had brought shame on them in the colonial wars which they wished to end. They were also far more susceptible to the influence of the mass movement.

General Spínola had tried to reconcile the different forces by bringing them together in a Council of State which consisted of equal numbers of representatives from the Junta, the MFA and the powerful civilians appointed by the General himself. But in the colonies the growing strength of the liberation movements and increasing demoralisation of

the armed forces necessitated a much more rapid disengagement than Portuguese capital would have liked. At home equally, rapid solutions to the 'problem of labour discipline' were becoming necessary. These aims could only be achieved with the direct participation of the MFA in the business of government.

The new government combination therefore included seven representatives of the MFA and was headed by Vasco Goncalves, who was generally regarded as favourably-disposed towards the PCP.

Potential disunity and unreliability amongst the armed forces led to the creation of an important new internal state security force, called COPCON (Operational Command for the Continent). COPCON had to appear to be independent from the old structures and also from the soldiers "who were on the side of the people". COPCON was not a new regiment but a new command structure, one which incorporated most of the armed regiments in Lisbon. It tended to act as a law to itself, headed by Otelo Carvalho. Although the avuncular Otelo was the architect of the 25 April coup at that time he was not well known and certainly not considered to be left-wing or even political.

On 28 of August workers of TAP went on strike. The airport was placed under military control and one of the leading workers, Santos Junor, was arrested by COPCON.

One of the first actions of the Goncalves administration, backed by the PCP but not the PS, was to initiate a series of strike laws. These



officially legalised strikes for the first time but banned political stoppages and sympathy strikes. A 37 day cooling off period was introduced.

The fight back was led by the Lisnave shipyard workers. Since the ending of the May occupation at Lisnave - negotiated by officers of the MFA - there had been a decline in spontaneous militancy. Nevertheless a handful of revolutionaries, mainly Marxist-Leninist, continued agitating over what it thought would still be a popular issue - the purging of fascists. It published a shipyard newspaper - '*Voz do Estaleiro*' and helped establish the 'commission of saneamento'. Saneamento was raised in the workers commission (*the assembly of delegates*). Meetings were organised outside working hours, on Saturdays. That on the 2nd of August attracted two hundred people. This was not considered representative so another was organised for the 15th. Five hundred came. (24)

The strike laws were introduced on August 29th, the day after COPCON forces occupied TAP. The demand for saneamento was immediately coupled with a demonstration and an 'illegal' one-day strike against the legislation. According to the leaflet calling for the demonstration:

"We do not support the government when it comes out with anti-working-class laws which undermine the struggles of workers against capitalist exploitation. We shall actively oppose the anti-strike law because it is a great blow to the freedom of the workers." (25)

The demonstration was attacked by the PCP and banned by the government. But would it be physically prevented by COPCON? On the day, September 12th, more than 5000 helmeted Lisnave workers marched in serried ranks to the Ministry of Labour in Lisbon. The shipyards were brought to a

standstill.

The effect upon rank and file soldiers was profound, as one of them testified:

"Before lunch the rumour circulated that we were going out and we soon guessed it was to Lisnave .... We formed up at midday and the commander told us that he'd received a telephone call about a demonstration at Lisnave, led by a minority of leftist agitators and that our job was to prevent it from taking place. We were armed as we had never been before with G3's and 4 magazines ... As you know, the demo began and a human torrent advanced with shouts of 'the soldiers are the sons of the workers', 'tomorrow the soldiers will be workers' and 'the arms of soldiers must not be turned against the workers'. The commander soon saw that we weren't going to follow his orders, so he shut up. Our arms hung down by our side and some comrades were crying. Back at the barracks, the commander wasn't too annoyed but told that in future we would have to obey orders...The following day in the barracks, things were more lively. Before morning assembly many comrades were up and shouting the slogans of the demo., 'the soldiers are sons of the workers', 'down with capitalist exploitation.'" (26)

On other occasions troops had been used against the working class but now the Lisnave workers had won the support of the rank and file in the army. In a leaflet, the Lisnave workers drew the political conclusion:

"We support the Armed Forces as long as they support the struggles of the oppressed and exploited classes against the exploiting and oppressing classes." (27)

Such highly conditional support was entirely justified, for units of COPCON could still be used against workers. But COPCON now often spent time listening to workers and arbitrating in disputes. The detachment from other institutions meant that COPCON could become more easily attached to the workers' struggle and it did so increasingly over the next 14 months.

By September, industrialists who had welcomed April 25, now began to

denounce the Provisional Government in the bitterest terms. They were worried that the troops could no longer be trusted and longed for "Law and Order" to be re-established. Many factory owners and foreign investors were withdrawing entirely from Portugal and sections of the ruling class now drew the conclusion that the use of armed force was becoming necessary and urgent.

Leading industrialists met with Spínola and a few of the generals. Spínola called on the 'silent majority' to mobilise, culminating in a march which was intended to be 300,000 strong. Arms were supplied to fascists who would foster enough disorder to give the generals an excuse to intervene, attack the left and re-establish 'order'.

Their calculations did not take account of the reaction of the mass of the workers. From 8pm on 27 September, the eve of the projected demonstration, barricades, sometimes armed, were set up on all the major roads into Lisbon. The gains established by the PCP and Intersindical were under threat. Although the PCP had been trying to establish itself as a moderating and respectable force, in these circumstances it galvanized its members and played a major role in mobilising people. The railway union had instructed its members to refuse to work the special trains to Lisbon and to search the normal trains for any travelling rightists. The coach drivers' union did the same. Only two coach loads of demonstrators entered Lisbon. Soldiers joined the barricades. The demonstration of the 'silent majority' never took place.

On the 29th of September Spínola resigned as President together with

three members of the Junta. Two hundred people were arrested by the MFA. The haul included the multi-millionaire, former officer and member of the Junta, Galvao de Melo. The following day the discredited Junta was disbanded and replaced by the MFA dominated Council of the Revolution. The Third Provisional Government was formed.

## 6 The Revolutionary Left

The failure of September's attempted coup gave a boost to the whole of the left and encouraged large numbers of people to examine the ideas of those who opposed the Right. Censorship had been abolished. Workers and soldiers were hungry for ideas, all sorts of new ideas. Pornography vied with political pamphlets on the street-stalls. Personnel managers read Trotsky on Dual Power. Lenin's *State and Revolution* was top of the booksellers' lists. Many were receptive to the ideas of the far left. Ideas and arguments were purchased wholesale. Workers were prepared to tolerate vitriolic language and seemingly obscure arguments in their search for new explanations and solutions.

A problem encountered by all the groups was the very strength of the popular movement. The success of spontaneous struggles and the ability of workers to learn and adapt during the course of events made the need for any party, let alone a revolutionary party in opposition to the PCP and PS, appear unnecessary, even sectarian. Belief in the mass movement surged, particularly in the early phases. This was comparable with the 'carnival' or 'honeymoon' periods in other revolutions. (28) The

response of many of the parties themselves was to be sectarian in their non sectarianism. The following report of the Lisbon demonstration organised by revolutionaries and workers on September 28 1974 against Spínola's coup manoeuvrings demonstrates this:

"In the course of the demonstration some members of the MRPP (a sectarian Maoist party) tried to join in. They were asked to remove any sign of their party. This they refused to do so they were not permitted to join in." (29)

For the MFA and the PCP this was a period of consolidation. The PCP, sharing the 'responsibilities' of government, dropped the call for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' at its November conference. Given the fertile conditions it is not surprising that on the far Left there was a plethora of revolutionary sects. (The Portuguese word for them is '*gruposculos*'.) In the Autumn of 1974 many of these groups had important conferences. Those which had been active were now beginning to build national organisations.

The newspapers of the '*gruposculos*', and not just those of the left, were boring, full of airy political phrases, and did not speak the language of workers in struggle. Yet a lot were sold. Most of the groups published weekly papers selling 10,000-15,000 copies per issue. Comrades would go down to the Lisbon Ferry stations with bundles of several hundred papers and return empty-handed. Saldanha Sanches, then editor of the MRPP paper *Luta Popular* said

"that the initial print order was for 100,000. Although a lot were kept under beds...comrades had to pay" (30)

Those groups who broke from orthodox Soviet Union dominated communist party politics did so as a consequence of the Sino-Soviet dispute and they sided with China. They were often called Maoists. In fact there

were variations in the support for China, especially when the Chinese Communist Party started relinquishing 'Maoism' and the 'Maoist' label could be misleading. In general these groups saw themselves as following in the tradition of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao and often called themselves Marxist-Leninist. (31)

The MRPP (*the Movement to Reorganise the Party of the Proletariat*) was formed in 1970. By 1974 it was the largest, strongest and certainly the most evident of the Maoist groups. The MRPP constantly condemned the MFA, COPCON, the PCP and the role of the Intersindical. It referred to the PCP as 'social-fascists' a term used by Stalinists in the early thirties to condemn social democrats. As far as the MRPP was concerned the PCP was the main enemy. Saldanha Sanches and others were arrested by COPCON. Because of its student base and hyper-activity the MRPP managed to make some inroads into the working class. It is significant that the MRPP built its base and even became a dominant force in the union committees at TAP, CTT and TIMEX - all places where COPCON had intervened against the workers. Such influence as the MRPP had amongst workers was often achieved in alliance with the PS, which usually did not have an organised framework on the shopfloor and was prepared to make common cause with the MRPP in its battle against the PCP.

In general the Maoists, while condemning the PCP as 'social fascists', shared its basic understanding of the struggle. Both the MRPP and the PCP argued that, given Portugal's economic and political backwardness, it was necessary to achieve national independence and democracy through an alliance of different classes in which the role of the working class,

although leading, was subordinated to creating a bourgeois democracy. Establishing socialism was out of the question because in 'underdeveloped' Portugal the working class was small. Actually industrial workers formed a third of the working population compared with one-twentieth in the Russia of 1917.

A number of the other small Maoist groups jointly formed, in December 1974, a popular front, the Popular United Democratic Front (UDP). One year later they were to amalgamate into a single party the PCP(R). One of the differences between those behind the UDP and the MRPP is that the UDP recognised Albania as the only true 'Socialist State' where the MRPP still supported China.

The UDP was seen as a Popular Front, not a party, embracing peasants, small businessmen and other who wished to see democracy in Portugal. It directed its slogans against 'both imperialisms', as if Portugal had an equal standing with Washington and Moscow. It was hostile to those who wished to move beyond national democratic politics. It saw Portugal as an exploited third world country. This message had some resonance in the MFA and non-Maoist left. Given the widespread support for the African Liberation movement it is hardly surprising that a third worldist ideology was common.

MES (*the Movement of Socialist Left*) had emerged from the electoral front of 1968, bringing with it a number of young militant Catholics. With its open organisation MES acquired a footing in the Intersindical, the textile and metal workers' unions and in the airport (TAP). MES

always stressed the workers' struggle and the struggle of the people. Rather than provoke arguments with its members active in the trade unions it allowed them to be seduced by the 'responsibilities' of union leadership. Failure to follow a consistent line meant that it was harder to make mistakes and correct them afterwards. MES is best understood as a centrist group. It tended to act as a pressure group rather than to stress in theory and practice the importance of building an independent revolutionary organisation.

Both of the tiny 'orthodox' Trotskyist groups - the LCI and the PRT - shared this last characteristic. In the case of the PRT, which aligned itself with the American SWP, pressure group politics took the form of hanging on to the coat-tails of the Socialist Party when it agreed that the workers' occupation of *Repubblica* newspaper be broken by military force. The LCI was not prepared to go that far but its basic political approach was not greatly different. It constantly emphasised the need to obtain a PCP/PS coalition.

In contrast the PRP/BR (*Proletarian Revolutionary Party/Revolutionary Brigades*) made it clear that the issue was not one of making leftish demands of reformists but of power being seized by means of armed insurrection. Guerilla traditions developed in clandestine operations against the previous regimes tended to lead the PRP to emphasise the role of the armed few acting in the name of the workers. This struck a chord in some radical officers but detracted from the work of building a mass workers' organisation through more humdrum issues and demands. Although prepared to organise the taking of power, the PRP/BR was



content to rely on the spontaneous development of the class as a result of day-to-day battles. The other distinguishing feature of the PRP/BR was that it saw that it was necessary to build a soviet-type network in Portugal. It was, in short, necessary for the PRP, as for other organisations of the revolutionary left, to prove itself in practice.

In the period immediately following the failed coup of September there was a comparative lull in the struggle. From the beginning of January 1975, however, more and more factories were occupied and land seizures and school students' strikes multiplied. Great opportunities for effective intervention by revolutionaries presented themselves.

## 7 Rising Struggle

On the 14th of January 1975 a gigantic demonstration, perhaps 300,000 strong, was organised by the Intersindical in favour of a unified trade union movement - *unicidade*. Virtually all the extreme left and all the workers' commissions supported the demonstration. The Socialist Party launched a stinging attack on the *unicidade* proposals, accusing the PCP of 'sabotaging democracy'. It supported the concept of *unidade*, which was a much looser federation of unions outside the influence of the Intersindical. The Socialist Party was prepared to split unions on political grounds. Accordingly it organised a rally in favour of *unidade*. It had little industrial base and was afraid of the power that could be wielded by the PCP once its *unicidade* proposals were

implemented. One Socialist Party official said after the rally, which was packed,

"for the first time we realized how strong we were" (32)

Significantly it was the two themes, the workers' movement and democracy, which precipitated the first open splits in the MFA. The cabinet was forced to add five clauses to the unificidade proposals opposing closed shops, instituting secret ballots, etc. In their union elections bank workers voted out Avelino Goncalves, the PCP Minister of Labour of the First Provisional Government, in favour of the MRPP candidate. (33)

The PCP had realised by now that it had made a mistake in ignoring the powerful workers' commissions which were very susceptible to revolutionary influence, and was trying now to gain ground in them. It organised, on the 2nd of February, an ostensibly 'non-party' conference attended by 191 CT's from throughout the country. (34)

This was partly in response to the emergence in the Lisbon region of a joint workers' council, namely the Inter-Empresas. The revolutionary left had a foothold in this which worried the PCP. The outstanding achievement of the Inter-Empresas was a demonstration, organised by delegates from 38 factories and held on February 7th, against unemployment and dismissals. This was despite severe condemnation by the PCP and Intersindical, coupled with orders prohibiting it. Arguments over the demonstration had already eroded the PCP/MFA bond. In effect the MFA had sided with the expression of autonomous workers' power. The organisation of the Inter-Empresas and the demonstration in particular

is described in detail later.

From January more and more factories were being occupied. The MFA was far more assertive; sections were deployed on the cultural *dynamisation* campaign. Troops were sent out to the villages in the north to organise, to 'educate', to show that the soldiers were on the side of the people. Workers took over the land in the Alentejo. School students throughout the country went strike. It is estimated that some 2,500 apartments were occupied in Lisbon in a few days at the end of February. (On February 18 the 120 day limit on vacant property expired.) The struggle was generalising. New confrontations were presenting political challenges, some direct and some complex, to which all the major forces had to respond.

Learning from the reaction to September 28 and their inability to mobilise civilians some members of the ruling class were now planning its next coup.

## 8 The March Conspiracy and the Elections

"The new class, placed in power by a revolution which it did not want, is in essence an old, historically belated, class; it was already worn out before it was officially crowned"

Leon Trotsky, 1930 (35)

Every new struggle became a political challenge. As in September 1974,

sections of the ruling class saw a military coup as the necessary response. It was to be an amateurish and a rather desperate affair.

The March conspirators included businessman Miguel Champalimaud (of the conglomerate by that name) and several high ranking military officers who had connections with Spínola. On March 11th two Harvard T-6 trainer planes and three helicopter gunships from the Tancos airbase strafed the RAL-1 barracks in Lisbon, killing one artillery man and wounding fourteen others. Paratroopers surrounded the barracks but could not be persuaded to fire. Fierce discussions broke out between the two camps. Within hours the paratroopers were explaining to the RAL-1 soldiers

"we are no fascists - we are your comrades"

The organisation of military resistance to the coup attempt was led by COPCON. COPCON had some forewarning and was on the alert. Working people responded magnificently. Within hours of the attack barricades were set up along the main roads leading out of Lisbon, Porto and along the borders to Spain, sometimes using expropriated bulldozers, lorries and cement mixers. Soldiers fraternised openly with workers manning the barricades and handed over arms. Armed workers searched cars. Strikers at *Radio Renascença* went back to work and occupied the radio station in order to 'defend the revolution'. Many papers printed second editions or special broadsheets, including the workers' committee of the big Lisbon daily *O Seculo*. This reported how the Porto section of the union of bank employees commanded its members to

"Close the banks immediately. Don't make any payments. Set up pickets at the doors to check entrances and exits. Watch the telex and the telephones."

After the failure of the coup right-wing generals and some company

directors were arrested. Spínola and others were whisked off to Spain, as an Intersindical leader put it, 'by the helicopters of reaction'.

Marx once said that the revolution needs the whip of counter-revolution. (From Russia there is the example of the Kornilov coup in August 1917.) The successful resistance to the coup gave a considerable boost to the revolutionary left. One conscript from the Caldas da Rainha barracks (consisting of 690 soldiers and officers) remarked on how easy it was to build upon that resistance:

"I joined the PRP after March 11th. When I joined there were five militants in the barracks. After three months there were twenty, two of whom were officers...

The PRP demanded, in response to March 11th, that one platoon of armed volunteers be assembled and if necessary, mobilised, to help the local population, and, if necessary, attack the fascists. The commander of the regiment, who probably had Socialist Party sympathies, succumbed." (36)

The PRP grew stronger by organising against possible further right-wing operations which in turn strengthened its tendency to concentrate exclusively on the threat from the right, real or imaginary, and to neglect the less spectacular business of relating to the independent struggles of workers.

The MFA was strengthened by the failed coups. After 11 March MFA institutionalised its power. At the top was the 'supreme' Council of Revolution responsible to the MFA Assembly of 240 delegates, in theory from any rank, from the three wings of the armed forces. Precisely because the Council of the Revolution was so confident, it felt able to honour its commitment to hold free elections.

It became increasingly clear that, with the conservative forces in disarray, the strategy of coup and paternalist modernisation could not win. One alternative method of survival for Portuguese capitalism was that of a strong Western European-type social democracy within a parliamentary framework. For some time the United States, through the CIA, had been pumping resources into the middle-class parties, including the Socialist Party.

The anniversary of the overthrow of the old regime, 25 April, was chosen for the first ever elections based on universal suffrage. Three weeks were allocated for electioneering. Intricate rules were established, including equal TV time for all parties standing, regardless of size; hence parties to the left of the PCP, which eventually won less than 8% of the vote, had more than 50% of the TV air time. Parties were not allowed to flypost on top of one another's posters. It became necessary to carry longer and longer ladders to reach bits of unposted wall. Interest was immense. Of the 6,176,559 enrolled electors, 5,666,696 went to the polls, 91.73% of the electorate.

The real victor of the election was the Socialist Party which obtained 37.87% of the vote. The PCP polled a rather meagre 12.53% plus the 4.12% of its close ally the MDP. Including the votes for the revolutionary groups, parties of the left won almost 60% of the total. 'Socialism' was extremely popular.

The status of the Socialist Party was transformed. From 200 members in April 1974 it had grown to the leading parliamentary party in Portugal

under the banner of freedom of speech, democracy, and a managed and modern economy. The precise practical meaning of these slogans remained unclear to those who supported them. The very vagueness of its slogans for 'progress', 'democracy' and 'socialism' enabled it to appeal to broad sectors of the population including the less organised workers who fell outside the influence of the Intersindical and the PCP. (37) The experience of reform when in power, commonplace elsewhere, was unknown in Portugal.

The Socialist Party often appeared more left-wing than the PCP. In September 1974 it had attacked the government's proposed labour legislation. It could afford to tolerate a left-wing within its ranks more easily, since it lacked the Communist Party's monolithic structure and discipline. In this respect the lack of an organised Socialist Party base in the factories was a positive advantage since it could afford to oppose unpopular government measures that the PCP members were expected to impose.

The newly-elected constituent assembly was not a supreme body: merely an advisory body to the MFA, which still appointed the President. The subordination of the victors of the elections to the Armed Forces was to be a source of increasing tension. Within 24 hours there was chanting at a Socialist Party victory demonstration of 'down with the MFA'. For the first time there was open conflict between a major political party and the MFA. Over the next six months the Socialist Party relentlessly pursued the interrelated themes of 'power to those elected', 'democracy', and 'freedom of speech'. Behind the slogans of 'pure

democracy' the forces opposed to the revolutionary movement rallied increasingly.

## 9 Popular Power

The election results were a humiliation for many within the MFA. They regarded themselves - certainly not Mario Soares and the Socialist Party - as the 'saviours of the people'. Leftists within the MFA were asking questions such as 'Is the Socialist Party merely a face of the bourgeoisie?' and 'Would the Socialist Party help to perpetuate the Revolution'?

As the Socialist Party gained confidence its differences with the military dominated government became clearer. The left within the MFA had to find an alternative. It was in these months after the election that *Poder Popular* (popular power) emerged as the ideology for the MFA. *Poder Popular* spanned classes, uniting the military with workers, peasants and tenants.

Popular power wasn't an empty term of the military. It was becoming a reality. Every day workers were taking over their factories on an unequalled scale. Unpublished Ministry of Labour statistics from 1976, long after the peak of the movement, show that, by then, 280 firms were under self-management - '*autogestao*'. A further 600 went a stage further and assumed ownership, becoming classed as co-operatives. The take-overs



were usually of small firms - the co-operatives averaged 45 employees while self-managed firms averaged 61. Many had been abandoned by their former owners and would have gone out of business in any programme of capitalist modernisation. (38)

The figures for workers' take-overs do not reflect the struggle in larger workplaces. Often the most militant enterprises were where the workers decided not to take over completely. For example the workers' commission at the headquarters of the construction firm Edifer took over the board room (and kept the drinks cabinet as a memento) but decided to retain the management. When asked why they replied "It is better for us to see what they are doing". (39) A militant from the Setenave shipyards put it this way:

"Even at Setenave we don't have workers' control. How can we if we don't control the banks. Our attitude is that we want to know everything... We want to control decisions but we do not take responsibility. We don't believe we can have workers' control alone" (40)

In the case of the larger enterprises the action of workers often forced the nationalisation of the firm or the industry. The first act of the Council of Revolution, after March 11, was to nationalise the Portuguese owned banks and insurance companies.

The take over in Lisbon of *Radio Renascença*, the former Catholic station, was particularly well publicised. The broadcasters hung a live microphone in the street so that whenever there was a demonstration passing by, or a deputation outside, there would be a live broadcast of street politics. (41)

After the failure of the March coup land occupations increased dramatically. Over the next six months landworkers in the Alentejo region occupied 200,000 hectares. The importance of the struggle of the landworkers cannot be over-emphasised. For the first time in living memory the drift from the land by workers was reversed.

Having occupied the land, the workers established agricultural co-operatives, often named after political events and characters. For example the 'Soldado Luis' co-operative was named after the soldier killed on 11 March at RAL-1 barracks. This large estate, somewhat similar to a Scottish Highlands estate, was owned by a count who used it mainly for shooting. One hectare of rice, a reasonable cash crop, was grown - for the water fowl. Most labour was casual. There was very little money invested except in delights such as the shooting lodge. Now the workers organised regular meetings and elected a small committee to run the place. Most impressive of the changes was the transformation of the traditional peasant women. Often illiterate, dressed in black from head to foot, they did much of the backbreaking labour. Now they not only ensured that they were paid regular wages and at almost the same rate as men but also played an active part in the management of the co-operative. The hectareage of rice was extended and the number of cattle increased. Tractors were borrowed with the help of agrarian reform organisations. The shooting lodge was converted into a cheese factory. The cheeses, made from sheep's milk, were supplied to factories in the Southern region of Lisbon which provided trucks to help with transport. Factory workers, students and the unemployed also lent

helping hands at harvest times. (42)

These take-overs, and the take-over of houses and apartments in the cities, drew into self-organisation many people who would otherwise have been excluded since they did not work in factories. The extreme left, workers, students, house-wives, and disabled servicemen were able to play an active part in the residents commissions. Some commissions gave sixteen years olds the right to vote at their meetings. The level of political discussion could be extremely high. As one worker put it to me, these residents meetings were the 'university of the class'.

The atmosphere was such that so-called 'marginal' sectors gained confidence and organised, a notable example being that of ex-servicemen disabled by the wars. Workers went and helped in the countryside. Children taught adults to read. Popular clinics and cultural centres flourished. People's tribunals were established. A golf course in the Algarve declared that it was now open to all except the members.

The workers at *Republica* took over their paper. Part of their manifesto proclaimed

"We declare to all workers that we struggle to ensure working class control over information... We are only 150 workers but in a sense we are representative of our class, of millions like us. What is at stake is political power and knowing in whose hands it is." (43)

The growing radicalisation affected sections of the army. The MFA found it increasingly difficult to preserve its fragile unity. Discussions in the MFA increasingly oscillated between the claims of discipline and those of *Poder Popular*. There was some talk of refusing to hand over

power. There was talk of benevolent dictatorship. Another idea was that the MFA should become a party. The options that presented themselves made the game of balancing, of making concessions to both sides, more and more risky to play. There was a shuffling of schemes.

One scheme was in favour of *Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors* – the CRTSMs. These had been conceived first by the PRP but were resuscitated by elements of COPCON, including its commander, Otelo. Otelo needed a base, an army in addition to the army. His idea was to build a national network of these councils. This particular proposal is examined in depth as one of the case studies. The PCP supported a similar proposal, that of the CDRs (*Committees to Defend the Revolution*). This is also considered in the CRTSMs chapter.

The CRTSMs were superficially very political – they claimed to be 'the first soviet of revolutionary Portugal'. But they were anti-party and called for 'a revolutionary government without political parties.' This disdain for party politics fitted with the military tradition of the MFA and its role of reflecting and mediating the different classes.

The very size and confidence of the mass movement created a whole set of attitudes, *apartidaria*, which can mean 'a-party', 'above party', and sometimes even 'anti-party'. We have the paradox of a very political anti-political tendency. The apartidarists even had their own newspaper – *República*. On May 15 the workers attempted to take it over; they wanted the paper to become politically independent. Their statement of aims (24 May) declared

"*Republica* will not henceforth belong to any party. All the progressive parties will be given identical treatment, depending only on the importance of events" (44)

Although there were special features (eg the role of the military) about the Portuguese process, similar anti-party revolutionary attitudes - often in the guise of syndicalism - have emerged in other revolutionary situations. Indeed in 1920 the Second World Congress of the Communist International developed an explicit strategy for trying to win over such anti-party militants. (45)

Previously *Republica* and its journalists had been firmly identified with the PS. The Socialist Party claimed that the take-over was communist inspired and its intention was to shut down the only voice of the PS. In fact the workers were also very critical of the PCP. Unfortunately for the PS, almost all the papers in Lisbon were to the left of the PS (and several were to the left of the PCP) due to pressure from their workforces, which had been politicised by their own battles and the struggles of others.

The cases of *Republica* and Radio Renascenca became internationally famous. They polarised opinion between the supposed supporters of 'freedom of speech' and those who sided with 'control by the workers'. These instances of 'popular power' provoked rather than concealed the question of class power and control.

Eventually one scheme for popular power appeared to unite the MFA. On 8 July, the General Assembly of the MFA narrowly approved the 'guidelines for the alliance between the people and the MFA', otherwise known as the

Povo/MFA pact. Its aim was to set up a parallel authority to the state and parliamentary system. The organisations of *poder popular* - the residents' commissions, the soldiers' committees (ADU's), workers' commissions and other local organisations would be integrated in the form of a pyramid, under the protection of the MFA.

Although largely written by the PRP the guidelines managed to draw in the PCP. MES supporters of the Povo/MFA pact cited the Pontinha assembly as an example. These developments are examined in detail in the chapter on Popular Assemblies.

The adoption of the Povo/MFA pact together with the continued failure of the government to ensure the return of *Republica* and *Renascenca* (where mass demonstrations forced the MFA to veto a government decision to return the station to the church and to allow the workers to retain control) led to Soares and the Socialist Party resigning from the government. This resignation - on July 10th, the day *Republica* was re-opened - was closely followed by that of the PPD and led to the formation of yet another government - the Fifth Provisional. This was the first government which did not include the Socialist Party or the PPD.

10 REACTION and RESISTANCE

Outside Lisbon the forces of reaction were gaining in strength. Western capitalist governments were insisting more and more urgently that Portugal 'put its house in order'. The retreat from the colonies meant that half a million bitterly disillusioned *retornados* had to be resettled and re-integrated into a population of nine million. Many settled in the centre and the north, already traditionally conservative areas. The north in particular was being left behind by the radical thought that was sweeping through some parts of the country. There were several reasons for this.

First the local government in many northern towns had been taken over by the Communist Party, whose focus on extending its influence within the state machine did little to improve the consciousness or morale of the mass of the population. Second land reform had far less impact in the north. In contrast with the south, where much of the land was worked by wage labourers on large estates, most farms in the north were extremely small. They belonged to small-holders or were farmed by individual tenants - a very conservative mix.

There had been little change in the conditions of the villagers and peasants in the north. Large parts were still extremely underdeveloped. Some of the remote mountain villages in the Trás os Montes had only recently started using money as a medium of exchange. Peasants still wore leather around their feet instead of shoes. The much vaunted

proposed land reform, which limited holdings to 500 hectares, or 50 hectares of irrigated land, scarcely touched those in the north, the overwhelming majority of holdings being less than five hectares. The minimum wage law did not apply to agricultural workers. Fertiliser prices had doubled. Peasants who rented the land now had to be given 18 years notice of eviction - but they were not given the right of ownership. Nor were they given any relief from their enormous burden of debts. The banks were nationalised, but the agricultural credit institutions were left untouched. (46) One of the far-left papers claimed 17,000,000 escudos was spent on advertising credit facilities but the actual release of credit was almost non-existent. (47) The endless media talk of a new life in Portugal contrasted starkly with the continuing grind of existence in the backward regions.

The failure of agricultural policy played into the hands of reactionary forces, especially the Catholic Church. The Archbishop of Braga equated the communists with Satan:

"We are called upon to fight for God or against Him. To draw back would be betrayal. And betrayal would be death.!" (48)

This same archbishop regularly supplied funds and premises to far right organisations (49) which, in what came to be called 'the Hot Summer of 1975', were directly responsible for burning down 60 offices of the PCP and the revolutionary left.

The political context within which the extreme right felt able to start operating openly was provided, however, by the Socialist Party, which, in the wake of its resignation from the government, unleashed a virulent



anti-communist campaign veiled with democratic rhetoric. Right-wing violence in the Provinces increased in its turn the political conflict in the capital. Splits were widening within the Revolutionary Council of the MFA.

On the 8th of August Major Melo Antunes and eight others of the Supreme Revolutionary Council issued an open letter which became known as *the Document of the Nine*. Because they made their criticisms public the signatories, which included all but two of the authors of the original MFA Platform, were immediately suspended from the Revolutionary Council. This letter, however represented the opinions of significant block of moderates officers, weary of the revolution. It started with 'It is a time of great decisions, a time to end ambiguities'. It argued that nationalisation had gone too far - 'at an impossible speed' - and, with some justification,

"From day to day an open rift is appearing between a very small minority social group (part of the proletarian zone of Lisbon and the south), who support a certain revolutionary project, and practically the whole of the rest of the country, who are reacting violently to the changes that a certain revolutionary minority is trying to impose without thought for the complex reality of the Portuguese people's historical social and cultural life.." (50)

It became a rallying call for moderates everywhere. The target of the Antunes campaign was the new Fifth Provisional government, sworn in the day after the release of the document, the first government without Socialist Party and PPD participation. The 'unitary' fifth government, much influenced by the PCP, was supposedly the most left-wing.

But the new government was criticised by the left too. A demonstration

of popular power was held on the 20th of August attended by 100,000 people including a large number of soldiers and with the support of more than 200 workers' and neighbourhood committees. The Communist Party supported it at only the last moment.

The growing isolation of the PCP from within the MFA, in the North, and from many rank-and-file militants, presented it with innumerable problems. It was partly to protect its left flank that the PCP initiated a united front - Frente Unitaria Popular (*FUP*) with six left groups which included MES, LCI and the PRP/BR but not the UDP. *O Seculo*, a daily paper influenced by the Communist Party, produced a special midday edition on Monday the 25th to welcome the establishment of the front as a historic occasion. Another enormous demonstration, although with fewer soldiers, was held on the 27th of August. FUP must have caused some bewilderment among the PCP rank and file, whose leader had only recently been stressing the 'battle for production'. Their confusion was quickly resolved. Within 24 hours of the demonstration the PCP withdrew from the front and called for a reconciliation with the Socialist Party and the formation of a coalition government.

The FUP front collapsed and the united front was re-formed on the 12th of September as FUR - Frente de Unidade Revolucionaria - with the remaining groups. FUR was to provide some cover, some unification, for the increasingly beleaguered left.

The Fifth Provisional Government, without the Socialist Party and PPD and with many stalwarts of the MFA suspended from the Revolutionary

Council, resigned on September 19th.

11 SUV - Soldiers United Will Win

The authors of *the document of the 9* were particularly worried by lack of discipline from in the army;

"We see a progressive decomposition of state structures. Everywhere wildcat and anarchistic forms of the exercise of power have taken over little by little even reaching as far as the armed forces" (51)

The confidence of the Socialist Party and strength of reaction in the North led to renewed confidence and arrogance amongst many of the career officers, who were largely outside the 'club' of the MFA but not fascists.

The strongest reaction came from a totally unpredicted quarter, a new movement of rank and file soldiers in the North. This emerged there in spite of and because of its being the heartland of reaction. Many of the soldiers involved were from Northern peasant stock, which, unlike that of the landworkers in the South, had no tradition of struggle.

A few militants ('two or three Trotskyists, one or two PRP, one JOC - militant catholics, one MES and one UDP') met secretly in a forest and drew up a leaflet protesting against the poor conditions of the soldiers. Thus began SUV, the first autonomous rank and file soldiers' organisation in Portugal. SUV stands for *Soldados Unidos Vencerao* which

means Soldiers United Will Win. Jorge was at that time a soldier serving in the North and was involved in SUV from an early stage. He said

"In the beginning the SUV had a connection with the Trotskyists, (the LCI). . . who were clearer in their politics, more radical and had a stronger ideology."

SUV called a demonstration in Porto on 10 September. It was estimated that there were 30,000 workers behind a contingent of 1500 soldiers.

Jorge said:

"As soldiers weren't allowed to sing in public we started whistling. However by the end everybody ends up singing.. singing the *Internationale*. The number of people on the demonstration grew in front of our very own eyes." (52)

SUV began to reveal to the soldiers the conservatism of their officers, which had been obscured by the prestige of the MFA.

"The day after the SUV demonstration was the anniversary of Chile and we wanted to have a minute's silence. The officers said no. We put bullets in our guns - and held our minute's silence." (53)

The soldiers began to make demands concerning the inequalities between them and the officers. They began to agitate for pay increases and free transport. For many soldiers a single trip to see their family cost them almost a month's pay. A member of the SUV secretariat, and of the LCI, said:

"In the general headquarters of Porto there were three separate mess halls, one for soldiers, one for noncoms, and one for officers. Three days after the Porto demonstration, some soldiers calmly walked in and sat down to eat in the officers' mess. The next day all the soldiers occupied the officers' mess. Since that day there has been a struggle to eliminate the separate mess halls and unify them....." (54)

Within weeks SUV had a national organisation, much to the consternation of both the new 6th Provisional Government and the MFA's Council of Revolution. On the 25th of September SUV held a demonstration in Lisbon in support of the Lisbon CM's and CT's. The estimated 100,000 present

included members of the PCP. About 4000 demonstrators requisitioned buses and freed soldiers who had been imprisoned 15 miles away when SUV leaflets were discovered in their lockers. Eduardo Duarte, who was involved in the organisation of the diversion to free the soldiers and a member of MES, recalls

"One of the things I will never forget is when, after we had seized a bus, (*in order to go to the prison at Traffaria*) and our heads were bursting with revolutionary enthusiasm, amazed by the bravery of our deeds - we were doing things we had never dreamed of - and I looked along the aisle and there were two soldiers with us and they were just sitting there reading their *Donald Duck* comics." (55)

Those readers of Donald Duck comics illustrate the uneven development of class consciousness. Soldiers and workers participated in what appeared to be 'fundamentally revolutionary' acts and yet their ideas were not necessarily fully developed and still included a rag-bag of notions arising from the culture foisted on them by the system which they were trying to overthrow.

SUV was the first organisation within the armed forces to take up rank and file, bread and butter demands. This gave it its strength and made it independent of the MFA. It was critical of the networks of soldiers' and officers' assemblies (ADU's) set up by supporters of the MFA in the majority of barracks. These had only 50% representation of rank and file soldiers.

By October SUV lost considerable momentum, especially after being out-manoeuvred in strategic showdowns in two barracks in the North. SUV never built a coherent 'command' structure.

"It could have been very good. Everyone was prepared to come

out and fight but they needed organisation - structure - to do something." (56)

In practice the organisational vacuum was filled by the loose and badly co-ordinated FUR alliance in which the PRP and MES were predominant. But the independent role of the struggle in the army was still of first importance. The control of the middle classes over the state machine was shaky, but this could only be a temporary state of affairs. Ultimately the development of the class struggle in the army depended upon whether the workers' movement could offer an alternative authority, a potential workers' state.

## 12 The Crisis Intensifies

The resurgence of the right in the summer of 1975 led to renewed fears of a coup. Many on the left, including those from outside Portugal, warned that the vicious military coup in Chile two years previously might be repeated in Portugal. Otelo de Carvalho, commander of COPCON, commented

"what worries me is the possible *Chileanisation* of Portugal.....they are building machines to kill. Machines for repression. With them they can set off a new Chile. I am haunted by that fear." (57)

The neo-fascists were not real contenders for power. The Portuguese ruling class itself had suffered the inconvenience of right-wing authoritarian regime. Nor was the example of Chile as inspiring to big business and the CIA as the left liked to imagine. Since the coup of September 1973 the Chilean economy had faced continuing crises. Both the NATO powers and the Portuguese ruling class far preferred to build a

stable bourgeois parliamentary system.

The vast majority of the left thought 'that there would be sharp armed clashes between the classes..within a few months (at most)'. (58)

Socialism or Barbarism seemed to be the alternatives. So the revolution had to be protected by every means. The PRP/BR called for an insurrection to protect the revolution while the ruling groups were in disarray. They argued that, as in Cuba, working class support would increase after power had been seized. The class would flower as it had done after April 25th and March 11th. Insurrection would be a technical service and the PRP/BR its technicians. The guerrilla tradition of the PRP/BR meant it was prepared to substitute itself (or COPCON) for the class.

The PRP was concentrating its hopes on alignments between left-wing officers, Otelo and COPCON in particular. In September it was in the middle of one such plot. One of its comrades, a Lisnave shipyard worker and a member of its leadership, 'phoned from a house in Salford, Lancashire, and asked impatiently, over the international telephone lines

"Well, when is the coup?". (59)

Luxemburg had foreseen mass strikes by large numbers of workers forcing the capitalist state to intervene on the side of the employers, starkly polarising society between two major camps, labour and capital. Trotsky had described such a development as one of 'Dual Power'. In Portugal the division never became so extreme. The capitalist class was not able to organise itself as a united force. Instead there emerged what Cliff

called 'Dual Powerlessness'. At the time he wrote

"Up to now the capitalists have not managed to get a clear grip on state power in Portugal, while the proletariat has not been able to challenge them for it. The result has been an unstable balance whose centre of gravity has been the MFA." (60)

Forces such as COPCON were ambivalent. Otelo's military aide, Captain Marques Junior, recalls:

"The biggest problem at COPCON in carrying out government orders occurred when people felt that these orders were against the ideals of the MFA. Everywhere the MFA were called upon by the people to solve their problems, and so power was given to them by the people. There was a point when in the eyes of the people the MFA was identified with COPCON.

COPCON was strictly an operational command without any law-enforcing function, but after the revolution the police force had lost prestige because they had supported the previous regime. Time and time again the police failed to act when told to by the government. The result of this was that COPCON was forced to step in and act both as policeman and as arbitrator. COPCON had no choice. Otelo was aware that often when asked to intervene he should not have done. As a member of the MFA and probably its leading member, he felt that he had a moral responsibility to try and solve the people's problems. Frequently it was the civilian government that handed over the problems to Otelo. It is difficult to say that he controlled COPCON. Theoretically he gradually lost power, but in practice this was not so. I think that some actions by the units and officers under COPCON were carried out not under his orders." (61)

The Sixth Provisional Government took office on 19 September. Again, all the major parties were represented but the Socialist Party and the 'Group of Nine' had gained at the expense of the PCP. This was to be the government until the next round elections in April 1976. But continuity is not stability.

The government had failed to exert control over whole sections of society. The mass movement was still strong. Land occupations accelerated towards the end of September. Within little more than a



month, more than three times as much land was occupied as had been in the previous year and a half. This was partly due to the Ministry of Agriculture's being forced to agree to make state funds available to pay salaries in the co-operatives. (62)

Ideological control of the media had still not been re-established. The unresolved struggle over Radio Renascenca epitomised the powerlessness of the ruling government and demonstrated how moods and energies shifted quickly. On September 29 Prime Minister Pinheiro de Azevedo ordered COPCON to occupy it. After a demonstration by workers, Otelo de Carvalho, in tears, ordered his troops to withdraw. Within six hours the radio was re-occupied by the commandos under Colonel Jaime Neves. An enormous demonstration on the evening of 16 October forced the commandos to withdraw and the radio started transmissions again.

The government was almost powerless. Its only resort was terrorism. On 7 November its saboteurs, under the protective cover of the supposed loyal 'and backward' paratroopers, blew up the station's transmitters. The paras thought they were providing protection and that 'the orders came from the left.' This betrayal so shocked them that they were to revolt within weeks.

The mass movement had involved huge numbers of people and there was still enormous potential support for popular power but weaknesses were becoming more and more apparent. Political consciousness was inevitably uneven and frequently contradictory.

"More than once I'd visit a factory which the workers were

running. They would be telling me about the evils of capitalism, how well workers could run things, the need to take state power sooner or later, because of the precariousness of the situation, etc, etc, etc, and then they would readily slide into saying 'and now the most important thing is the battle for Production'" (83)

The reformists and the right could not count on the sympathies of such people. The forces of law and order couldn't guarantee law and order. But the call for stability was making headway. A preponderance of left and right military intrigues was particularly numbing. Rumours of impending coups were an endemic feature of political life. In Barreiro, across the Tagus estuary from Lisbon, the *bombeiros* (voluntary firemen) sounded the fire-bells at any sign of a 'putsch' and the population, often woken in the early hours of the morning, rushed into the streets, only to discover the alarm was false. One of the reasons that it did not take to the streets on November 25 in support of the left and popular power was that it did not identify with what were presented as 'left-wing coup adventures'. The move against the left was justified on the grounds that it was the left itself which was preparing a coup.

Some workers were demoralised as a result of empty promises. Financial crisis and withdrawal of investment had taken toll. How could such a poor country have a socialist revolution and survive? Where was the money to come from? Could more be done within the national boundaries? What about inflation?

The consequences of workers controlling their own workplaces did not always lead to greater militancy. Cliff and Peterson wrote:

"But workers' control without workers' power has terrible consequences. The fight for workers' control without workers'

power tends to become control over the workers by the capitalist system . . .without state power the lack of technical and administrative experience further weakened the confidence of workers in their own ability to manage the economy." (64)

Many workplace and community meetings went on till the early hours of the morning. I remember a worker from the Sacor refinery saying that his workplace meeting finished at 4.00 am and they had to start work again at 6.00 am. Some workers, especially those who were not inspired by a revolutionary vision, dropped by the way. Sometimes workers stopped being active themselves and abdicated, leaving decisions to the technicians, the experts and the 'politicos' in the factories; to the Communist Party and the Socialist Party outside the workplaces. The adaptability of these reformist organisations within the working class meant that they could attract tired workers looking for safer solutions.

In Lisbon militants in the factories were turning to a network of workers' committees built up by the PCP. The inaugural conference of *Cintura Industrial de Lisboa* (CIL) - the Workers' Committees of Lisbon - was held on the 8th of November 1975. 124 workers' commissions sent delegates and 400 people attended the meeting. Most of the major workplaces were represented. Several unions including the Intersindical went as observers. On paper this was the most powerful conference yet of workers' committees. Many non-aligned militants attended but the agenda and discussion was dominated by the PCP. There were working sessions on:

- a Workers' control
- b Unemployment
- c Wage claims

- d     Nationalisation
- e     Agrarian reform
- f     Co-ordination of the workers' commissions
- g     Popular assemblies.

The CIL attempted to set up a co-ordinating framework for the Popular Assemblies. CIL also launched what was to be a truly gigantic demonstration, (some said of more than half a million), on November 16th against the threat from the right within and beyond the 6th Provisional Government.

The militants of PCP were certainly to the left of their own party. If they hadn't been they would not have managed to build CIL. The strength of CIL was that it could co-ordinate with a national strategy of resistance. Its weakness was that it did so only in a half-hearted manner and was very much influenced by the tactics of the PCP. The revolutionary left had no organised plan for intervening inside the conference. The PRP and UDP decided not to do so on the grounds that CIL was dominated by the PCP. The PRP wasn't willing to fight for what were conveniently dismissed as reformist demands. MES was not able to make an impact. The revolutionary left had not developed a united front strategy, one that avoided both unprincipled compromises and dogmatic sectarianism. (65)

In contrast, only 30 miles to the south the Setubal *Comite de Luta* - Committee of Struggle - showed what could be done. Here the revolutionary left set the pace. The PCP were sufficiently flexible (and isolated) to feel it had to be involved. The case of the *Comite de Luta*

occupies a separate chapter.

The building workers are another illustration that the struggle within the workers' movement was by no means exhausted. Previously construction workers had not as a whole been an active sector in the working class. Many were peasants who had migrated to towns for work, some were blacks from the Cape Verde islands. In mid-October workers from 32 CTs met and formulated a demand for a national wages structure and a single union for the industry. A national strike and march was organised. The climax was the biggest demonstration ever held by one sector of workers, at Sao Bento, the home of the constituent assembly. The workers erected barricades in an area up to 15 blocks away from Sao Bento itself. The streets, many of them narrow, were blocked with tractors, cement mixers and trucks. Building workers armed themselves with pick-axes, clubs, etc, and held hostage the members of the Constituent Assembly. Prime Minister Azevedo asked the commandos to come and rescue them. They refused. He then requested a helicopter to rescue just a few of them. The Military Police overheard the request, alerted the building workers and the helicopter was prevented from landing. After 36 hours the Prime Minister conceded all the building workers' demands with effect from 27 November. (66)

The paralysis of formal government was so total that on 20 November it actually declared it was not going to do anything 'political' but would merely act in an administrative capacity until the resolution of the power conflict.

By late November it was obvious to all that 'something' had to happen. There had been constant rumours of coups and counter-coup preparations. There had been the building workers' strike and siege of parliament and the governments' declaration that it could no longer guarantee order in Lisbon. The government threatened to set itself up in exile in Porto while the peasants and farmers in the North threatened to cut off food supplies to the 'red commune' of Lisbon.

From October onwards the moderates in the army had been consolidating their position. Behind the scenes, preparations were now being made for a decisive move against radical sections of the troops. A SUV occupation in the north was outmanoeuvred. After SUV disturbances at Beja in the central region 3 captains and 49 airmen were sent home. With the granting of independence to Angola there was less need for conscripts and several thousand were demobbed.

Members of COPCON knew, even in September, that coup preparations were being made by associates of the Group of Nine. Captain Arlinda Ferreira, an air force officer and one of the founders of the MFA, stated that

"In my possessions I have a document, written by Melo Antunes in September, in his own hand-writing, with details of the plan." (67)

Along with the Group of Nine another group emerged, the operationals, under the leadership of Colonel Ramalho Eanes. (68) The operationals

included hand picked troops, many of whom had been expelled from their own barracks. The Group of Nine gave the operationals a political dimension. In return the operationals gave the Nine military strength and carried with them support from many non-committed and right-wing army officers.

On November 18th Soares met with a number of senior MFA moderates to discuss political strategy. All were aware that increasing anarchy had paralyzed the government and that a 'psychological' shock was needed. They did not feel they had the confidence or strength to administer it directly. They preferred to set up a plan, under the command of Colonel Eanes, to counter any left-wing coup attempt. They did not intend to act immediately but to wait for a favourable moment.

Events in the army were coming to a head. The 1600 previously loyal paratroopers from Tancos, some of whom had been used in the demolition of Radio Renascenca on November 7th, had learned from the harsh criticism directed at them by workers and soldiers from other units. They now rebelled against their officers and forced 123 of the 150 officers to walk out.

The Council of the Revolution ensured a showdown on the evening of the 24th of November when it confirmed the appointment of Vasco Lourenco to replace Otelo as commander of the Lisbon military region, which included the paratroopers. Otelo boycotted the meeting. In the early hours of the morning officers opposed to his dismissal urged Otelo to defy it. He refused and went home to bed. In his absence an *ad-hoc* grouping of

officers decided that the administration school (EPAM) should take over the radio, the military police would protect the TV and that RALIS (formerly RAL-1) should guard the motorway leading north out of the city. But left-wing revolutionaries were not preparing an insurrection, as was subsequently alleged.

By the morning paratroopers at five bases (Tancos, Montijo, Monte Real, Ota and Monsanto) had occupied their barracks, demanding the dismissal of their own commanders and to be placed under the over-all command of Otelo and COPCON. Otelo, as he always seemed to do at moments of crisis, went to see his fellow officers and the President at the Presidential palace. As on September 28th 1974, he was forcibly detained.

By this time a state of emergency had been declared and the anti-revolution operation centre set in motion with its headquarters at the commando barracks at Amadora. In charge was a Colonel Eanes. In effect the operations centre used only 200 people as its task force, this including the highly 'professional' commandos led by the notorious Colonel Jaime Neves, and some officers who had been sacked by their underlings from other units. (Two months earlier Jaime Neves had been ousted from command by his subordinates. It was only the intervention of Otelo, motivated by sympathy for a fellow officer, which got him re-instated.)

The 'moderates' moved into action. They sought to avoid a potentially bloody confrontation. Even they must have been surprised at the ease with which they succeeded. They were not sure that the commandos would



leave the barracks - let alone fight. Once on the road, however, the confidence of the force grew. It paraded past the Military Police barracks on the afternoon of the 25th and Neves said he would return later to deal with them. The *chaimites* (armoured vehicles) of the commandos went to Monsanto. Neves fired a few shots and ordered the paratroops to surrender through a megaphone. This they did. They saw no alternative, no way to fight back. The operations force then returned to take on the Military Police in the early hours of the 26th. Three soldiers were killed before the military police too surrendered.

Now, one by one, all the rebel units collapsed. The officers 'on the side of the people' failed to act. This had a domino effect. People were confused, and demobilised. For example, just before midnight on the 25th, several hundred working-class people gathered on one of the approach roads leading to the Military Police barracks. There was a discussion with a bus driver. Should they turn his bus over?. It would help to make a good barricade. On the other hand perhaps the Military Police wanted to take to the roads. Nobody seemed to know. Nothing was done. (69)

The previous day, the Lisbon ferries and many factories had emergency meetings and stoppages lasting 2 hours in order to discuss the threat from the right. (70) But on the 25th

"People stopped working - but there was no organised strike. Many did not go to work, other went in, saw nothing was happening so came into town. Some went asking for machine guns in front of the barracks; there were assemblies in factories but no-one knew what to do." (71)

It is not as if militants did not want to fight. A image from RALIS

parades through the memory. At dusk on the 25th a lone militant shook the fencing outside RALIS barracks shouting and crying 'the soldiers are always on the side of the people. Always! Always!' No soldiers or bystanders joined in. The slogan which had served so well in demonstrations rang empty.

Although the means by which Neves and Eanes mobilised is still obscure the events of 25th of November demonstrated the lack of any serious military organisation among and by revolutionary soldiers. This comes out clearly from the following interview with two PRP comrades on November 27th, before breakfast.

"There was no co-ordination. The PCP expected COPCON to arrange things. COPCON did not. It hesitated, wavered, and so on. The same happened with the so-called revolutionary units because they were caught in a totally defensive position, discussing and so forth. Inside the barracks they did not take a single initiative. Yet they were exposed to the extent that they never pledged themselves to the military commanders and did not follow this or that order.

No-one offered resistance (to the commandos). There were only a few shots in the case of the military police (PM). And even there the top commander opened the door to them.

One of the military police (PM), a soldier, told me ...there was not anyone to give orders. Although the soldiers were refusing to accept any military discipline, they did not know how to operate in any other way... The so-called revolutionary officers are finished." (72)

The main mistake of the left was the reliance on others of the left within the army.

"FUR had a great responsibility because it did not attack the notion that the soldiers would conduct the revolution for them. There were illusions in Copcon/MFA. There was no alternative command. Generally the PRP and FUR propagated lots of illusions about what the soldiers would do for the revolution. The lesson is that belief and faith in soldiers was their undoing." (73)

All the revolutionary groupings were taken completely unawares by the speed of the events. None were involved in instigating the military response. All except the MRPP understood that the paratroopers had to be supported. The government, backed by the PCP sent up a barrage of stories claiming that the attempt to prevent the sacking of Oteló represented a bid for state power. The radical soldiers and their friends on the revolutionary left were isolated.

The PRP had for some weeks been issuing propaganda which gave the impression that insurrection was a short term prospect. This error, however grave, did not directly influence the main course of events. The role of the PRP in the organisation of military resistance was negligible. What it did do was make the organisation particularly vulnerable to the charge of 'putschism'.

The left groups confined their attention to military matters. For example it was noted with regret that Lisnave had only 60 guns. Before November 25th many of the activists were aware of their isolation and the enormous gap which existed between rhetoric and the achievements of workers' power. The focus was on the military and not the working class. The officers 'on the side of the people' failed to call on supporting action from allies. Neither they nor the left groups called for strikes, occupations or barricades.

A strike and occupation by a powerful group of workers such as Lisnave could have given a lead to those waverers in the armed forces and to other sections of workers.

Although sections were exhausted the movement was still enormous and it was by no means spent. The resistance by groups of building workers gives some indication how the working class could have exerted its not inconsiderable forces. Building workers, using walkie talkies, commandeered enormous earth-movers and concrete-mixers in order to block the advance of the commandos. In Setubal they contacted the Comité de Luta and asked them to set up blockades around the city.

In the preceding weeks the PCP had turned left, once again, in order to retain its political support and to buttress its position within the unstable 6th Provisional Government. On 24 November it called a two-hour general strike against the threat from the right, with limited success. The sergeants of the paratroopers and some of the officers who planned the resistance to the removal of Carvalho were encouraged and influenced by the PCP. But on the afternoon of the 25th the PCP sharply altered tack. (74)

It used its main agencies, the Intersindical and the Cintura Industrial De Lisboa, to do so. Officials and activists in the engineering union offices who were organising overnight occupations and strikes changed their tune at 6 o'clock on the Tuesday evening when the message from headquarters got through. (75) Other unions got the message later. One of the workers at the Ministry of Social Communications recalls witnessing union officials backdating the call for a retreat from the 26th to the 25th of November. (76)

Costa Gomes, the President, made it quite clear

"We have to thank the PCP for not letting 25 November end up in civil war. On that day, the PCP supporters were intending to block the barracks of the commandos with bulldozers and excavators. They invaded and surrounded the naval unit at Almada and the Alfeite arsenal. These communists withdrew when I asked the CGTP to do so. (*The CGTP was the new name for the Intersindical.*) The communist supporters were armed and, if they had not withdrawn, there would have been a civil war. In his speech, Melo Antunes was acknowledging the collaboration of the PCP." (77)

Vasco Lourenco shows insight into the reasons for the about-turn:

"The PCP was aware of its own weaknesses, and the proof of this is that on 25 November communists avoided confrontation and pulled back. The PCP was always trapped between two attitudes: one was its desire to control large sections of Portuguese society, such as local government, the media, etc, with its own methods; the other was that it had to deal with the ultra-left and not appear reactionary, and this sometimes made the PCP act in a cavalier-like way." (78)

The PCP was prepared to abandon its radical army supporters (and a great many others) in exchange for a continued stake in Government. Pires Velosa, the commander of the northern military region, explicitly perceived one of the aims of 25 November as being

"to save the PCP by defeating the far left, which was not controlled by the PCP any more." (79)

In real terms the level of physical repression was slight. Some 200 soldiers and officers, plus a handful of building workers, were arrested. Yet the 25th of November was the turning point. The change was abrupt - similar to the change described by George Orwell in Barcelona in 1936 where the 'startling change in the atmosphere' is something which is 'difficult to conceive unless you actually experience it'. (80)

The secretariat of the Comité de Luta continued to meet, disdainful of the arrest warrants which had been issued. Several of the assemblies met

(Gondomar and that of the 7th Zone of Lisbon) but such efforts were sporadic. November 25 in effect spelt the end of the Popular Assemblies. Many of the residents' organisations folded and the CTs became more inward-looking. Strikes still took place, especially in the North. It was touch and go whether building workers would take up their demands once again, their previously conceded wage rises having been rescinded. In the event they were disarmed by their own unions.

Sections of the left mobilised around the June 1976 presidential elections when Otelo succeeded in attracting 16% of the vote. This was double that of the PCP, and the PCP obtained half that which it had attracted in recent elections. This could be taken as an indication of Otelo's charisma and, also, that there was still some support for a radical front. However, despite this limited success, the left parties never recovered from the trauma of November 25. The PRP attempted to relocate itself away from the military but failed and no longer exists. Its main leaders were imprisoned for long periods, accused of bank robberies. Others modelled themselves on the Red Brigades and formed a group called FP25. The MES re-organised and eventually disbanded itself. Those parties which put least faith on the Army officers, the UDP and LCI, are the ones that survived and, despite name changes, are still in existence - just. In this way the revolution petered out.

## Background - References

- 1 Refer to Maria de Lurdes, Lima dos Santos, et al., *O 25 de Abril E as Lutas Sociais Nas Empresas; Greve e o 25 Abril*, (BASE); and further details are summarised in the Vignola dossier, pages 369/70. This dossier was compiled by Gerry Vignola who was working alongside Bill Lomax on the research project funded by the Ford Foundation. The dossier comprises more than three hundred typed pages of notes and translations. The numbering has been added by this writer.
- 2 Interview with Agostinho Roseta, 3/5/84. \*
- 3 Interview with Jose Sousa, 29/4/84. \* Corroborated by Roseta interviews.
- 4 Figueiredo "*Portugal- Fifty years of Dictatorship*", pages 231/2.
- 5 A most readable account of the coup in English is *PORTUGAL- The Year of the Captains* by the *Sunday Times* Insight team.
- 6 Figueiredo, *op cit*, page 233.
- 7 Mailer, *Portugal: The Unfinished Revolution*, page 44.
- 8 Downs, *Community Organization, Political Change and Urban Policy: Portugal 1974-1976*.
- 9 Interview with Melo Antunes in Ferreira and Marshall *Portugal's Revolution : Ten Years On*, page 163.
- 10 Insight, *op cit*, page 120.
- 11 Interview with Agostinho Roseta, 3/5/84. \*
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- 14 Details from Gallagher, *Portugal - a Twentieth Century Interpretation*, page 172; Richard Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, pages 136 & 146; and Hammond *Building Popular Power*, pages 33 & 55.
- 15 Gallagher, *op cit*, page 172.
- 16 Richard Robinson, *op cit*, pages 136 & 146.
- 17 Interview with Carlos Nunes, 4/6/84. \*
- 18 Insight, *op cit*, page 152.
- 19 Interview with Fernanda, 30/4/84. \*
- 20 Interview with Agostinho Roseta, 3/5/84. \*
- 21 Figueiredo, *op cit*, page 238.
- 22 Patriarca, *Análise Social*, no 51, page 647.
- 23 Vignola dossier, section on origins of CTs quotes from *Sindicalism em Portugal 1977/78*, published by Assiro e Alvim.
- 24 For a detailed account see Maria de Fatima Patriarca "Operarios da Lisnave de 12 Sept. 1974", *Análise Social*, number 56.
- 25 Reprinted in *Combate* no.7, September 27, 1974.
- 26 Published in the first issue of *Causa Operario*, a Marxist-Leninist paper, September 1974.
- 27 Full text of the Lisnave workers' manifesto is in Mailer, *op cit*.,

- pages 373/4.
- 28 Trotsky describes a similar process in the *History of the Russian Revolution* when writing about the honeymoon period following the February Revolution.
- 29 *Revolução*, the paper of the PRP, number 15, 4/10/74.
- 30 Interview with Saldanha Sanches, 4/4/84. \*
- 31 Refer to the article by Martins and Loureiro in *Historia*, March 1980, on the Marxist-Leninist left.
- 32 Douglas Porch, *The Portuguese Armed Forces and the Revolution*, page 135.
- 33 *Ibid*, page 134.
- 34 Refer to *Conferencia Nacional Unitaria de Trabalhadores - Conclusoes* documents.
- 35 Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, page 208.
- 36 Interview with Jorge, 2/8/80. \*
- 37 Ian Birchall develops a similar analysis of the Socialist Party in "Social Democracy and the Portuguese Revolution", *International Socialism*, Second Series, number 6, Autumn 1979.
- 38 The returns to a Ministry of Labour questionnaire provided the following reasons for transformation in Lisbon: bankruptcy 7%, abandonment 44.3%, fraud 9.6%, contract violation 15.4%, managerial incompetence 11.5% and unlawful firing 11.5 %. Taken from Bermeo's essay on "Workers' Management in Industry", Graham & Wheeler *In Search of Modern Portugal*.
- 39 Interview with Edifer worker, December 1975. \*
- 40 Quoted in article by Cliff and Peterson, "Portugal: the last 3 months" *International Socialism*, number 87, March 1976. Robin Peterson was a pseudonym of the present author.
- 41 Denis Macshane, *New Statesman*, 18/7/75.
- 42 Conversations; I worked there for a few days in April 1976. Refer to interview with Pedro Olivais, April 1976. \*
- 43 Mailer, *op cit*, page 231.
- 44 *Ibid*, page 229.
- 45 Refer to Trotsky's *The First Five years of the Communist International*, page 97.
- 46 Cliff, *Portugal at the Crossroads* (*International Socialism* 81/82, September 1975), page 39.
- 47 Interview with leaders of ORPC(ML) - one of the Marxist Leninist groups which supported the UDP - in *Diario Popular*, 7/8/75.
- 48 Richard Robinson, *op cit*, page 242.
- 49 Gunter Wallraff, *The Undesirable Journalist*, (Pluto Press, 1978), pages 13/4. The author of this thesis was given a copy, via the IS, of a telexed arms order which included mortars and bazookas. This was sent from Porto, in the North. This telex was passed onto to the PRP, and thence COPCON.
- 50 *Expresso*, 9/8/75, quoted in *Portugal at the Crossroads*, page 29.
- 51 *Ibid*.
- 52 Interview with Jorge, 13/8/80. \* At that time he was a soldier serving in the north in the RTM (regional transport barracks).
- 53 Interview with Jorge, 13/8/80. \*
- 54 Interview, dated 23/9/75, with member of secretariat of SUV included in *Os SUV em Luta*, translation in *Imprecor* 35.
- 55 Interview with Eduardo Duarte, December 1979. \*



56 Interview with Jorge, 13/8/80. \*

57 Jean Pierre Faye, *Portugal: The Revolution in the Labyrinth*, (Spokesman books Nottingham, 1976), pages 49-50.

58 The quote comes from Chris Harman, "Portugal :the latest Phase" in *International Socialism*, number 83. At the time sections of the left were trying to prepare for the forthcoming conflict by obtaining arms. The most dramatic incident concerned the re-direction of 1500 G3 automatic weapons. This had been done by Captain Fernandes, a PRP sympathiser and under the command of Otelo. Otelo was to say that the weapons "were in good hands". For all its seriousness and pomposity the acquisition rivalled the Keystone COPS. An IS comrade was one of those asked to drive off the lorryload of arms. As he could not speak Portuguese he gratefully declined. The eventual driver turned out to be a MRPP supporter, whose paper promptly exposed the 'diversion' of the weapons. The sources remain confidential.

59 Personal recollection.

60 Cliff, *Portugal at the Crossroads*, page 41.

61 Captain Marques Junior interviewed, Ferreira and Marshall, *Portugal's Revolution : Ten Years On*, pages 106/107.

62 Lomax, "Ideology and Illusion in the Revolution", in Graham & Wheeler, *op cit*.

63 Annie Nehmad in a letter to this writer, March 1986.

64 Cliff and Peterson, article "Portugal: the last 3 months" in *International Socialism*. This article quotes from several interviews with workers about the problem of workers control in their own workplaces.

65 For example refer to Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*.

66 Refer to a marvelous eye witness account by Ben Pimlott, in the magazine *Labour Leader*, February, 1976.

67 Interview with Major Arlindo Ferreira, Ferreira and Marshall, *Portugal's Revolution : Ten Years On*, page 150.

68 Captain Ramos, who had been Spínola's private secretary and was released from prison on November 25th said of Eanes.  
 "He emerged as a leader because he was a respected military man with a good cultural and political background. He was not a revolutionary, but he was accepted by the moderate left, as he is not a conservative. He is a reformist."

Interview in Ferreira and Marshall *Portugal's Revolution : Ten Years On*, page 112.

69 Personal recollections.

70 SWP & IS writings have claimed 90% of the workers in Lisbon area had stoppages on November 24th; this is a gross exaggeration. I attended a meeting addressed by a delegate from the Ralis barracks in the canteen at Plessey's. My feeling is that at most 20% of the workforce stopped work to listen.

71 Interview with Mauricio Levy, December 1975. \*

72 Cited in *Lessons of 25th of November*. Interview with Bruno do Ponte, 27/11/75. \*

73 Interview with Francisco Queros, 1/5/84. \*

74 The first issue of *Republica* following November 25th contains

similar examples.

- 75 Conversation on 26 November 1975 with Jan Birkett-Smith, a Danish comrade who was in the union offices the day before.
- 76 Interview with Jorge Freire, 26/12/75. \*
- 77 Interview in Ferreira and Marshall *Portugal's Revolution : Ten Years On*, page 181.
- 78 *Ibid*, page 136.
- 79 *Ibid*, page 140.
- 80 George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, Penguin, London 1962, page 110.

## THE INTER-EMPRESAS

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## 1 Origins

On April 25th forms of workplace organisation were extremely fluid. Workers' commissions were only emerging. Although they did not always call themselves workers' commissions (CTs), for the sake of consistency the initials CT will be used when referring to democratically elected committees responsible to the entire workforce. Most workers' commissions did not have minutes, newsheets or bulletins. But without doubt there was an explosion of workplace meetings accompanied by a proliferation of CTs. This process has been already described. The main concern in this section of the chapter is how and where did the CTs make connection with one another? Did they do so before April the 25th?

The strike at TAP in 1973 was organised by a group of workers who in effect set up a workers' committee. This, in its planning stages, was not elected. That it was representative of a substantial proportion can be demonstrated by its effectiveness in mobilising the workforce. The TAP grouping was a component in a very frail network of workplace organisations called the COZs (Comites Operarios de Zona) which also had connections in Petrogul, some textile factories - together with the union, STC, Lusolite, in factories in the Aveiro district and in sections of engineering. These workplaces were among the most militant before April 25. The struggles were influenced not by the PCP but by

loose groups of militant workers which came to be identified with MES. Strictly speaking COZ groupings were not clandestine CTs as they were not democratically elected. They were rather, clandestine groupings in factories which at various times gave a lead in the workplace struggles. (1)

The PCP claimed to organise the forerunners of the CTs, but others remember differently

"the CTs did not appear on April 25th as many have supposed. There are traditions of struggle during the fascist period of these organisations of the will of the workers, the commissions of unity" (2)

Immediately prior to 1974 there is little evidence of PCP involvement with the CTs. The PCP's emphasis was upon commissions of unity, which they perceived as a semi-clandestine means of extending the influence of the unions. The Intersindical was very conscious of the limits of the tolerance of the dictatorship and carefully held back for fear of being made illegal but it did foster the commissions. (3)

Despite the PCP having a legacy of being involved in workers' struggles the strikes of 1973 far exceeded its orbit of influence. In the majority of cases when the workers did take action they bypassed the unions and the commissions of unity. Militants from outside the PCP are keen to stress that the PCP militants had little role in the CTs

"Because the PCP did not control the workers' movement that re-appeared at the end of the 60s they have to now rewrite the workers' history and to invent clandestine workers' organisation. Various committees existed very briefly at the moment of conflicts, using various names. There was no link between them - that is an invention of the PCP." (4)

Although the emphasis of the PCP, before and immediately after April 25,

was not upon the CTs it did have some influence in different workplaces. This was channelled into union structures. MES also could have used its influence in workplaces to help establish a non-party network of CTs. It did not do this, partly because it had no clear strategy and, also, its militants were putting considerable efforts into MES.

Nevertheless, immediately after the 25th, links between workplaces were established, and rapidly. One such link was in and around the giant shiprepair yards at Lisnave, the most modern and second largest in Europe. This group of workers' committees was loose and sometimes known as the organisation of the inter-empresas ('inter-enterprises'). It has not been possible to find written records of the first meetings. Only four of those interviewed went to any of the early meetings and only two, Artur Palacio from Lisnave and Fernanda from Plessey, have detailed recollections.

Artur Palacio worked at Lisnave for many years and was very involved in these meetings. He first became involved with the Communist Party in his teens, in the early 50's. On April 25th he was a militant member of a tiny Marxist-Leninist sect, which later was to help to found the UDP. When interviewed in 1980 he had been a member of the Lisnave Workers' Commission for most of the time since its inception. He recalled:

"I remember almost all the meetings. I attended some fifteen or twenty meetings but cannot recall how often they met. They were not regular meetings but occurred whenever the need arose. I believe that the initiative to form the Inter-Empresas came from Lisnave itself but am not sure. . . The first meeting had more than 200 people; it was held at Lisnave; during the period of the May strike. . . That first meeting in May had the character of support for strikers. 25 contos (25,000 escudos - approximately 500 pounds sterling)

was collected for the workers of Sorefame. . . .

Many different things were discussed. The main concrete thing was raising money. . . . . There were many people experienced in workers' struggles including some from CUF, Parry & Son, S.R.N., Olho de Boi (a naval base shipyard), Cergal, Applied Magnetics and Sogantal. Some of the factories had not even a workers' commission then, just workers who came from the factories.

The first links had a solidarity nature. When, for instance, the small factories around Lisnave were under attack and the workers were running risks of losing their jobs, they would come to Lisnave to ask for solidarity, complete solidarity. Of course Lisnave was a big concentration of some ten thousand workers." (5)

Fernanda asked that her surname not be quoted in the interviews. At the time she was a young assembly worker for the Plessey multi-national. Plessey employed a total of 4,300 workers, most of them women. Fernanda worked at the site on the south bank of the Tagus estuary. She was a member of the first workers' committee. Although she considered herself generally of the left she was not a member of any party. She was delegated to attend meetings of the inter-empresa.

"The first meetings at work happened practically immediately after the 25th of April and there was a meeting of our own council more or less every day. . . .

At that time people said 'why should we be on our own if other people (across the road) have the same problems?' Then we decided to join, and to discuss things in general. . . .

After our own council was elected I went to these meetings as representative of the council of workers at Plesseys.

They (the council meetings) would hear a report-back. Always in some form or another, oral or written. The meetings would ask if anybody had been to meetings with other workers and what had happened at those meetings. . . .

The inter-empresa meetings were a place, a way, for people to meet and discuss. . . . There were a lot of discussions. The main purpose of these meetings was to defend the revolution. In general the meetings took place at Lisnave. To a certain

extent the inter-empresas were Lisnave. It was common knowledge that anything Lisnave did the inter-empresas did. . . . practically all the factories from the Margin SUL- (South Lisbon conurbation, on the far side of the Tagus Estuary) - were there." (6)

Carlos Nunes started work at the Rocha Yards of Lisnave in April 1972 and has worked there ever since. He is a metalworker. He was elected a delegate to the CT (at Lisnave it was called the CDT - the committee to defend the workers) in May/June 1974 when delegates were first elected, after the 'ad hoc' commission, and served on the CT until 1978. He joined the PRP in January 1975 and was a leading member by November 1975. (7)

Carlos went to some of the meetings but was not very involved in the early days. This was because he was based at the Rocha yards on the North Side of the Tagus and did not hear about many of the meetings until too late. Nevertheless the purpose of the meetings was clear

"The idea of the inter-empresas was that each individual firm would not be isolated."

He said that financial collections were an important activity but it is clear that workers at Lisnave and Plesseys had been organising collections before being involved in the inter-empresas.

The meetings were not very formal. In the early days they were known by a variety of names. Palacio kept using the word 'inter-commissoes'. Roseta from the textile union used the name 'commissions of inter-empresas'. Fernanda from Plesseys said

"The term Inter-Empresas came much later but workers were contacting each other in different places in order to fortify their power."



It would be wrong to over-emphasise the formal connections between the CTs and groups such as MES, the Marxist-Leninists and the PRP. The evidence is that the co-ordinating organisations developed spontaneously from below, but key political activists also happened to be supporters or members of groups on the fringes of the extreme left. The tradition of clandestinity severely impeded the ability of the smaller parties to organise. Nevertheless the general emphasis of the extreme left was on the self-activity and organisation of the working class.

## 2 Political Influences

All accounts of those first inter-empresa meetings stress that workers came together spontaneously and that the meetings were 'apartidaria'.

The energies of the PCP were focused on winning as much influence within the unions as it could. It was barely active in the workers' commissions and not at all active in the inter-empresa. In the words of Palacio

"At the time the PCP had little influence in these comissoes; it attacked them violently. It even called them 'ultra-left', 'playing the game of the right', 'lackeys of the bosses'." (8)

Nevertheless individual members of the PCP often helped build the workers' commissions. This conflict resulted in many experienced worker militants leaving the PCP. (Paradoxically, a number were also joining because it had a national base.) (9)

Acacio Barreiros was interviewed about the political origins of the Inter-Empresas. At the time of the interview, April 1984, he was a deputy for the PS. In 1976 he was the only member of the UDP elected to the Constituent Assembly and had been a leading activist in 1974. In his view the inter-empresa, in its

'first phase was free of the hold of the PCP' (10)

This in itself set a political tone. Many of the Marxist-Leninists were extremely hostile to the PCP (perhaps having been expelled from it).

These meetings were not organised by any of the major parties of the left. The majority of workers did not necessarily perceive a need to organise across factories. After all the workers had forced major wage concessions, the fascists were on the run, the capitalist class was hardly organised and the armed forces appeared to be on the side of the people. The main explanation for the success of these meetings is that they coincided with a need felt spontaneously by a sizeable minority of militants. Factors such as rank-and-file anger, lack of PCP presence, and the apartidaria nature of the meetings did not preclude all 'party' political influences.

Individuals of the Socialist Party and also of the PCP participated. PCP militants did not automatically follow the the line of the party bureaucracy. The PRP had some influence. A prominent member was Manuel Crespo, a Catholic worker priest from Lisnave. Many of these people were ex-members and sympathisers of the PCP who would not turn to the PCP or its satellites (especially in that period). The majority of those who left the PCP for other organisations joined one of the Maoist groups.

Not one of the sects was large enough to organise on its own or gravitate others around its own organisation.

"it was only later that the Marxist /Leninists emerged as an organising force" (11)

Swamped by their need to organise their own papers and organisations none of the Marxist-Leninist sects had a clear strategy for working in the inter-empresa. Nevertheless their militants almost instinctively saw the need to create forums, break down their own isolation and organise between factories.

A loose network of political militants, ex-PCP, Marxist-Leninists and non-aligned appears to have been the backbone:

"There were political forces active setting up the Inter-Empresas; the Marxist-Leninists." (12)

"A number of militants of the far left, not (yet) of a Leninist Party, tried to link the CT's." (13)

The Marxist-Leninists were more wary of the military than either MES or the PRP, had no connections with the military and had no strategy for working with it. The Marxist-Leninist groups were too small, isolated in themselves. They needed a forum. The inter-empresa had the added advantage of being free from the influence of the PCP with whom they were loth to work. Such was their hostility that if the PCP organisation had had an organised presence it is unlikely that the Marxist-Leninists would have been prepared to participate.

The inter-empresa attracted a variety of Marxist-Leninist activists but their number in those early days must have been very small - several dozen at most - and badly divided at that. Palacio attempted to sort out

the tangle:

"In the Inter-Empresas there were three tendencies. The most influential were i) CARP(ML); the next most influential were ii) CCR(ML) and then there was also iii) the URML. In December of 1974 these three tendencies merged into the ORPC(ML) which was the main group; which published '*Causa Operario*' and had its front, the UDP." (14)

Given that in the factories many militants were looking for alternatives which strengthened the independent power of the working class, a group of 10 or 20 people, or a group with connections in more than one factory, could have had a very important role in the building of the organisation. No such group existed. Nevertheless there is evidence of some political cohesion within the inter-empresa which affected its development.

### 3 The First Written Account

It was much later that the Portuguese press developed sufficient perception, and sympathy to start reporting workers' organisational structures. Not surprisingly the first written evidence of one of these meetings comes from the paper of one the Marxist-Leninist tendencies. '*A Verdade*', Year 1 number 4, dated the 3/9/74, reported a meeting of what it called the 'inter-comissoes'. *A Verdade* was the paper of the PCP(ML). This particular group had its founding conference in Paris in 1970; nine people attended and it had split into two parties of the same name earlier in 1970. This particular faction was known as the Mendes faction. In 1975 it was not part of the UDP front but known as PUP and obtained 0.23 %, less than 13,000 votes. Early in 1976 it was to

amalgamate with 7 other sects and found the PCP(R), which became the political party behind the UDP. (15)

The meeting, reportedly of more than 100 workers, took place on August 11th. By then there had been some decline in the spontaneous struggle and many workers were on holiday. The location was Montijo, on the south bank of the Tejo, upriver from Lisnave.

Although this article rapidly falls into sectarian, vitriolic language and is side-tracked into rather obscure arguments it is important because it both provides the first written source of information and also gives some impression of the atmosphere. Here are extracts:

"a meeting was organised by the more conscious and active workers of Lisnave, Efacec, CTT, Timex and Signetics, at which were discussed several aspects of the strikes and occupations which have happened in these places. The issues were wage rises, saneamento and better working conditions. This debate set itself the task of analysing victories and defeats and, mainly, drawing some lessons from the new Portuguese reality ('*realidade*')."

Much of the rest of the article was dominated by the vanguard party theme.

". . . one of the participants suggested, correctly according to us, that for a concrete analysis and the correct conclusions it would be necessary to analyse the struggles according to a party political perspective; in other words a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party had to determine whether there was a need or otherwise for all these struggles to be co-ordinated."

Under the heading 'Sabotage Attempt' the article refers to a 'Trotskyist element'. The term Trotskyist was sometimes used by 'Stalinists' merely as a way of labelling anybody as the enemy. This element was unlikely to have been a Trotskyist - the LCI only had one comrade who may have participated in this meeting - it was more likely to have been a member

of the PRP.

The alleged Trotskyist said it was

"necessary for the working class not to allow itself to be trapped by any leaders (*cupulas*) or party which only serves to betray its own interests. . .for example in Russia, China, etc.

When he was asked afterwards where he thought there had been victories of the working class almost all the cases which he referred to the working class had been defeated, even crushed. (He cited the cases of the Paris Commune, the Battleship Potemkin, the Spanish Civil War, May 68 in France, Poland in 1971, etc). This obviously served to help unmask him, as any conscious worker does not allow it to be stated that the working class did not achieve its liberty in the Soviet Union at the time of Lenin and Stalin, or even today in Albania or China."

The supposed crime was to speak against

"the proposal for party leadership, indispensable to directing the struggle of the working class"

and the report continues

"that counter-revolutionary was able to impose onto the meeting for some time that the discussion should base itself on relating experiences which after all were already known by almost all the workers present."

Despite obsessions with so-called 'counter-revolutionary' influences the report attempted to relate the struggles, the tactics and lessons from assorted workplaces, e.g.:

"The demand of the CTT for a 35 hour week does not seem to us to be correct because it allows the PCP to unleash its campaign of demagoguery. . . . Thus and despite having started before the beginning of the open war of the PCP against the strike movement. . . the TIMEX strike achieved a great victory. . . it was able to mobilise the solidarity of the workers of other firms. At CTT and Efacec the lack of unity was felt by the workers, who were divided in different sites, therefore they produced a strike bulletin which had an important role in the strike . . .at the Signetics strike it was important to underline the work by the P'C'P in demobilising the workforce"

The initial C for Communist is placed in quotation marks in order to emphasise that the PCP were not true communists. This antipathy, shared by all the Marxist-Leninists, to the PCP was to mean that in practice they did not work with PCP members over issues that they agreed on. Undoubtedly the debates were political and veered wildly from the specific to the general. Political options from different sects were heard and examined. If most of the meetings were like the one reported above, dominated by tiny sects arguing for Marxist-Leninist Leadership, it is hard to imagine how any genuine organisation of workers' commissions could breathe.

There is some later evidence that workers active in the Inter-Empresas were less than happy with the reporting. *A Verdade* itself, in February 1975, tells the reader that the editorial of the third bulletin of the 'Inter-Empresas' raised a number of points about the previous issue of *A Verdade*, to which the paper would reply. (16)

#### 4     28 September 1974

In September strikes were still occurring and workers' commissions were the lynchpin organisations. The CTs were recognised by the Government as ad-hoc bodies. Nevertheless the Government was often using the military to intervene in the strikes although the military did not always use physical force. On August 29 1974, in response to a proposed strike by

the maintenance workers, Lisbon airport was placed under military occupation and the TAP workers placed under martial law. After nearly a month the workers threatened to strike if the military were not withdrawn. Instead of meeting the worker's demands the army arrested fifteen leading militants. A protest demonstration of 4,000 TAP workers, including the entire maintenance section, forced the Government to release the fifteen but 280 workers were sacked the following day. (17)

On Friday the 27th of September there was a strike and demonstration by several thousand TAP workers who demanded the re-instatement of all those dismissed. They were joined by delegations from other workplaces. Despite the sectarian current the inter-factory meetings gained momentum. This was because of the need to exchange experiences, organise solidarity and establish a co-ordinating structure. These factories included Lisnave, Efacec-Inel, Applied Magnetics, Messa, Setenave, Timex, CTT and TAP. (18)

A demonstration was planned for the 28th of September in defence of the strikes and against military intervention on the side of the employers and managers. It was claimed later in the first editorial of the bulletin of the Inter-Empresas that

"Only the frequency of our meetings and the non-existence of a political vanguard made it possible for our direction to organise the huge popular demonstrations of the 28th of Sept." (19)

Meetings were held on the nights of Thursday the 26th and Friday the 27th to prepare and mobilise. However, as it turned out, the 28th of September was the day that Spínola called for the march by the 'silent



majority' on Lisbon, so the demonstration was also against Spínola's manoeuvrings.

Fátima Patriarca is a sociologist specialising in Industrial Sociology.

In an interview she recalled the meeting of the 27th

"On the night of the 27th there was considerable confusion. Every organisation was having meetings. Their messengers were running from one meeting to another to keep contact. All the key activists were at the Inter-Empresas meeting. It was the intervention from the Lisnave delegate, a member of the PRP, which settled the issue of the demonstration. He wasn't a delegate in the fullest sense. As it was it was noticeable how few Lisnave workers were at the demonstration, which started from Alcantara. The Intersindical neither supported nor condemned it.

Up till then the discussion (*about support from Lisnave*) had been unclear. There had been some disagreements because some said that it was merely division within the bourgeoisie. Also there were practical reasons for refraining from demonstrating." (20)

So it came about that the only demonstration of workers that took place on the Saturday was organised by the 'Inter-Empresas'. One of the few accounts of it were published in the paper of the PRP/BR, *Revolução*, issue number 15, 4th of October, 1974.

"The commission of workers, linked with various enterprises - TAP, Lisnave, CTT, Efacec, etc - started the demonstration at 14.00 in the Terreiro do Paco."

A demonstration at 15.00 hours starting from Largo de Alcantara, organised by some small political groups was absorbed by that of the Inter-Empresas:

"the LCI, *A Verdade*, the UR Marxist-Leninist and the PRP/BR. . . .the two demonstrations met up and united; the workers took the lead. . .

It was agreed that the demonstration was to be unitary in character, and that party emblems were not to be displayed. The people in the streets, whose sentiment was profoundly anti-fascist, joined in. . . .The multitude was swelled to

around 40,000.

The slogans of the demonstration were

Death to Capitalism, Death to Fascism!

Popular Government - Yes!, Government of the owners - No!

Death to the PIDE!

For Popular Justice!

Strike - Yes!, Lock out - No!

The working class will win!

. . . . When the demonstration reached San Bento, outside the palace, the words from workers of enterprises in struggle were taken up, and the slogan 'CTT will win!'

On the course of the demonstration some members of the MRPP tried to join in. They were asked to remove any sign of their party. This they refused to do so they were not permitted to join in."

This demonstration reached its destination at 20.30. There is no indication of how long it remained outside San Bento. Even by the standards of Portuguese endurance six and a half hours is a very long time. This was because, apparently,

"it was not exactly a demonstration but a series of barrages (ie barricades)"

Also the impression was that it

"was mainly the revolutionary left on that demonstration not the Inter-Empresas" (21)

Many workers' organisations asked for support on the local barricades, which were set up from the Friday evening. Most workers interviewed said that they manned barricades at the nearest strategic point. They did not have any reason to travel into Lisbon.

5 The Union Question

Given the victory of September 28 one could surmise that the Inter-Empresas would have become more confident and organised. Although the meetings were very open, more people were being delegated by their commissions. The meetings settled down into a once-a-week pattern. After 28 September the Inter-Empresas started using its name with capital letters. It may be that the fusion of the two demonstrations on the 28th precipitated greater involvement by the revolutionary left.

The political climate changed. The military toned down its attacks on strikers. The credibility of the PCP had increased and its alliance with the MFA (and 'with the people') appeared to have paid dividends. It was the PCP and the MFA who had countered Spínola and defended the revolution. The 28th of September was to be a turning point in the workers' struggles. Workers appeared to be less concerned with *saneamento* and more with the issues of unemployment, rising prices and production. The spontaneous factory strike wave had subsided. The unions were taking up more wage claims and broader industrial issues such as nationalisation. The Intersindical was attempting to gain recognition as the sole federating authority for all Portuguese trade unions. These might be reasons for the Inter-Empresas not having a high profile. There is no public record of any large scale activities from September the 28th up to the end of the year. Nevertheless a TAP militant recalls how the workplace meetings

"at the time were very political, always discussing the general events. I remember how we spent time discussing the slogans of the PCP - 'it is the duty of workers not to make big wage

demands' - and that 'we had to remember our poorer fellow workers, and, especially, the peasants in the fields'" (22)

The issue of the unions was crucial and had to be resolved by the Inter-Empresas. The only reference I have found to the Inter-Empresas in the non-revolutionary press appeared on 26/11/74 in *Diario Popular*, entitled 'the Inter-Empresas position on the unions'. This stated that they considered it urgent that the unions be restructured, constituted by branches of activity or industry. It was in favour of one central organisation and called for the massive adherence of the workers to the unions. The editorial in the first issue of the Inter-Empresas bulletin (2/1/75) summarised the discussion which had taken place.

"The domination of the unions by the reformist leaders, who are more and more subordinated to the employers, impeded and still prevents the fights we have for better conditions for life and work and for the emancipation of the working classes. . . . .

We enter now a new phase of our work in which we can define a platform of our primary objectives. They are as follows:-

#### OBJECTIVES of the INTER-EMPRESAS MEETINGS

- 1 They should have the character of unions.
- 2 Their aim should be one of fighting for unions of the class which defend the interests of the class and not creating a parallel organisation to unions
- 3 The study of the forms of struggle and discussion of organisational forms which would be more suitable to the defined objectives
- 4 The presentation of perspectives with the aim of offering resistance to the selective sackings by the employers and fighting for control by the unions
- 5 The election of a commission with the authority to study the following
  - which enterprises should be represented
  - which unions and members are representative
  - documentation concerning the enterprises and the unions" (23)

If one examines the agreed objectives there is direct contradiction between the first which says the Inter-Empresas was to 'have the character of unions' and the second, resolving 'not to create a parallel organisation to unions'. Despite variations, the predominant attitude to unions was fundamentally flawed. It was not clear whether the intention was to replace the unions or to complement them.

Militants were confused about the role that the unions should play. At the meetings there was a variety of attitudes towards the role of the unions. Furthermore the unions not only varied considerably but were themselves undergoing major transformation. Some stressed that the Inter-Empresas should be the real union organisation. Others thought that in those exciting, indeed potentially revolutionary days it was possible to bypass unions. In general the Marxist-Leninists were extremely hostile to the existing union leaderships. Those unions which hadn't responded sufficiently to April 25 were still considered relics of fascism whereas those in the control of the PCP could be branded as social-fascist. Despite the hostility some of the militants wished to intervene and try to win over the unions. Others had a plan to break away and set up alternative 'red unions'. Those sympathetic to the PRP or to *Combate* had little time for unions.

Already, in practice, there was an overlap of the unions and CTs on issues such as saneamento, working conditions, workers' control, redundancies and sackings. In many areas and industries it had not been possible to eliminate this overlap, or the problem had been resolved only after conflict. The potential creation of a framework of CTs

accentuated the conflict. This meant that it was inevitable that there was no love lost between the Intersindical leadership and the Inter-Empresas. The hostility was often evident, one notable instance being on the demonstration held on February the 7th. After the rally and speeches enthusiastic chanting of slogans continued late into the night. The Intersindical was called 'yellow'. *O Seculo* (8/2/75) records that the slogan 'Down with the yellow unions' was chanted a number of times and greeted with long applause.

In spite of the debates the Inter-Empresas never developed a clear strategy for fighting inside, let alone for the unions which the majority of workers supported. Because the movement was used to strikes and massive street demonstrations there was a certain lack of patience with trade union organisations, dominated by PCP bureaucrats. But while the militant workers, often from the bigger factories, might not look to the Intersindical before moving into action, for many workers in smaller factories with less experience of struggle the unions were more important than ever.

There are parallels with the Spartakist movement in Germany. At their founding conference, held after Christmas 1918, Paul Frolich raised the slogan 'Out with the Unions', calling instead for 'workers' unions' which would end once and for all the distinction between the unions and the party. He was attacked by Rosa Luxemburg - but for not putting the emphasis upon workers' councils. She too thought that the unions should be liquidated in the immediate future. The discussions at the Spartakist conference and the Inter-Empresas meetings shared the same impatience

and reluctance to work inside the unions and together with those many workers who had joined unions and wanted large scale reform. In contrast the Bolsheviks in Russia found it necessary to put an effort into trade union work even after the October Revolution. This they perceived to be a way of bringing political activity to significant new layers of workers. Some months after the Spartakist conference the Bolshevik representative in Germany, Karl Radek, insisted that no revolutionary can overlook the need for unions; the

"masses who are developing through the revolution go as a determined force into the unions to abuse their leaders." (24)

## 6 Organising Links

Other than attempts to clarify its position regarding the unions there is not much evidence, up till the end of 1974, of Inter-Empresas activity. The workers from TAP pulled out. Following the attacks by COPCON many of the workers at TAP, in disillusion, turned to the MRPP which gained control of the airport union committee. The MRPP, at that stage, did not support the Inter-Empresas and TAP stopped sending delegates. The PCP were always overtly hostile to the organisation.

"First of all the PCP came into it to see what they were exactly but when they saw they were to 'put power in question' they retired, they began to boycott it...." (25)

But, up till February 1975, there was some participation by militants who were members of the PCP.

The PRP/BR leadership discussed the Inter-Empresas in December 1974, but

made no concerted attempt to take part in it, because of the influence of the Maoists. (26) Yet its weekly paper carried long articles on the relationship between party and autonomous class organisation. The leading PRP comrades from Lisnave who participated in the Inter-Empresas were referred to as 'anarcho-syndicalists' by some Marxist-Leninists. (27)

Many workers from the multi-nationals sent representatives. Comrades from the Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating Committee, a support group based in Britain, attended meetings in order to try and create links with workers from Portuguese branches of the multi-nationals. Fernanda, from Plesseys, went along to a meeting to discuss the attempt by Plessey workers to make international connections. She also went on a speaking tour of England.

The main task of the Inter-Empresas was to exchange experiences. Workers at the time stressed the importance of their own newsheets and bulletins:

"One of the main features of this period was the small papers - bulletins - published by workers' commissions. There were strike journals e.g. the *Jornal de Greve* from Efacec-Inel. There was a general exchange of papers among all those factories so that we would pin those papers up inside each factory so that the workers would find out what was happening" (28)

Yet it took from September to January for the Inter-Empresas to print its first bulletin. The author of this thesis has copies of the first and fifth issues, dated 2/1/75 and 3/3/75. These bulletins have proved to be very difficult to obtain which is perhaps an indication that they did not play an important organising role. The two bulletins are four



pages long and consist of two folded A4 sheets.

The first bulletin announced that it

"will be distributed as widely as possible. This pamphlet is made by workers and needs the voluntary contributions of everybody. So give what you can to the comrade who is distributing this paper.

This newspaper is the reporter of the facts related by comrades who were represented in the meetings, comrades who are fighting for the unions to be on the side of the working classes."

The circulation of the bulletins was largely contingent on the activity and the number of factories present. Mailer provides a list of 24 firms involved, amongst them the largest in Portugal, in January 1975. The companies represented were: Efacec Inel, TLP, TAP, Lisnave, Setenave, ENI, Siderurgia, Cergal, Plessey, Timex, Fabrica Portugal, Rebel, Dyrup, Technividro, Sotecnica, Applied Magnetics, Acta, Bertrand, Nitratos de Portugal, Messa, EIP, Pfizer, Xavier de Lima and INE. The workplaces represented stretched right across Lisbon. (29)

It was intended that the bulletins should play a role in the organisation of activities. The first bulletin announced the next meeting to be in Lisnave - Margueira - at 10 o'clock on Sunday the fifth of January, 1975.

Its agenda was simply

- 1 Information
- 2 Analysis of the work being done
- 3 Unemployment

That last item, unemployment, was to put the Inter-Empresas on the national map.

## 7 Preparing for the 7th of February, 1975

Companies such as Applied Magnetics, Lisnave, Plesseys, Timex and IIT attempted to slim down their operations and, sometimes, to move out. Many small and medium enterprises were bankrupted or simply abandoned by their owners.

Even in June workers, such as those at Timex, were fighting redundancies. By January of 1975 there were a number of bitter battles against them; one example comes from an electrical engineering group, Efacec/Inel. The 1000 workers in the Lisbon branches were involved in trying to get some of their own workers re-instated, and also, to spread the campaign beyond their own enterprise.

A mass meeting of 294 workers met on the 14/12/74. The statement unanimously agreed by the meeting noted that the unions were not providing a suitable front in the battle against sackings. The meeting resolved to strengthen solidarity with all the comrades in other factories who were fighting against unemployment and that a further meeting would be held to consider appropriate forms of action.

The follow-up meeting, held on the the 4th of January, was attended by 583 workers. They re-affirmed their resolve to not work overtime, noting that similar action at Siderurgia (the steelworks) had forced the re-employment of 800 workers). It was also agreed that the workers' commission should immediately contact other workers' commissions with a view to organising a united demonstration in Lisbon against redundancies. (This was one day before the Inter-Empresas meeting which had unemployment on the agenda). With this prompting the Inter-Empresas organised the demonstration - 'as a concrete form of struggle.' The meeting of the 27 January, attended by 37 CT's, fixed the date for February the 7th. (30)

"The fact that the demonstration was proposed by Efacec/Inel was not particularly important. You cannot talk about one development in isolation. The proposal coincided with a number of factors which one has to remember at that time were taking place; the bosses were running away and there was a growing awareness of each factory becoming isolated unless they got together and organised.

From what I remember it cannot be said that one thing started off the demonstration." (31)

The preparations were taken up in workplaces previously unrepresented.

Some rank and file railway workers met. There were

"30 - 40 people were at the meeting a week before February the 7th.. For the first time we met all together in the union offices... We decided which place the transport would go from. We discussed also the need to work in the unions." (32)

One worker recalled the Inter-Empresas meeting of 2/2/75:

"the biggest meeting I can remember was in the 'Voz do Operario' where there were about 1000 people. It was the meeting to plan the demonstration. The support of Lisnave workers was decisive." (33)

Carlos Nunes recollected

"The platform was dominated by the left. The political presence in the meeting was the UDP, PRP, MES (although they only had a

few workers). The PCP was not there, although there may have been some fellow-travellers. The President (chairperson) of that meeting was in the UDP. The predominant influence at the meeting was the UDP.

That sort of conflict, between those from Efacec who voted to identify solely with the Inter-Empresas and those with the UDP, was normal at that time." (34)

The statement proposed by the Efacec/Inel delegates read

"COMRADES: It was several months ago that the Inter-Empresas Meetings approached the problem of unemployment, of dismissals and the forms of struggle to adopt. In the meantime, some factories have taken a position against dismissal and unemployment. The Plenary of the Workers of EFACEC/INEL (South) demanded a demonstration as a concrete form of struggle. The CT proposed the demonstration to the Inter-Empresas meeting which decided to organize it.

Considering that the question of unemployment is at this moment the one most felt by the workers, considering that the unions must express the will of their members, and as such must support all the initiatives broadly felt by the workers, it was decided in the Inter Meeting to send this text to all unions so that they may support the demonstration, in the terms already decided in the Inter-Empresas meeting."

The text was approved in the Inter-Empresas Meeting with the presence of workers of 38 firms. (35)

The lead banner was to read

"Unemployment is an inevitable consequence of capitalism. That is why workers want to destroy it and build a new world."

This is how the French daily left-wing paper *Liberation* described the call for the march

"The leaflet calling for support of the march made clear the intentions of the commissions: A demo clearly without party. Political organisations that want to support this initiative can do so by leaflets, but at the demo they must bring neither slogans nor their own banners. The organisation of the demo allows for the participation of isolated workers, of students, of soldiers and of sailors, as long as they accept the stewardship of the Workers' Commissions. The aims: against redundancies, against unemployment and overtime, for higher basic wages, for the right to work.

The Commissions claim that if two million workers worked an hour a day less, this would create two hundred and fifty thousand jobs. Lastly, the leaflet stressed the anti-capitalist nature of demo. Unemployment is an inevitable consequence of capitalism. That is why workers want to destroy it and build a new world. And this was written on the banner that led the demo on 7 February. At the last minute, the Commissions decide on another slogan: 'NATO out, national independence!'. " (36)

Part of the American fleet was in Lisbon, undertaking NATO exercises.

All the political parties in the coalition government opposed the demonstration and it was prohibited by the Civil Governor of Lisbon, (a PCP fellow-traveller) who banned all demonstrations in the city from the 7th to the 12th of February.

The PCP supported the ban. It questioned the 'representativity' of the demonstration and raised doubts as to its 'true intentions'. The PCP considered that any 'clash with NATO troops would favour the interests of reaction'; Octavio Pato from the PCP went on TV and advised people to give flowers to the marines of the Nato fleet. The trade unions in the South (part of the Intersindical) called the demonstration 'an attempt to confuse the democratic forces and to sabotage the construction of democracy'. *Diario Popular* (12/2/75) reported that the Intersindical said that this was

"one more attempt to sow confusion among the workers since the slogans and its organization outside the representative structures of the workers demonstrate the true intentions of the organisers"

and that the MRPP considered it an

"anarcho-sindicalist manoeuvre that seeks to attack the vanguard of the working class."

The PCP had some success in the workplaces in sabotaging the demonstration. The day after the massive planning meeting, where the promise of support from Lisnave was decisive, a general assembly of Lisnave workers turned down formal support for the demonstration. People were still permitted to go in a personal capacity. Even the Socialist Party cell at Lisnave was enraged; it urged its supporters to attend. (37)

Nationally only the far left groups the UDP, LCI, LUAR and the PRP showed support. But the MFA had still to consider its position. At the time *Liberation* commented:

"By coincidence, the monthly delegate assembly of the MFA was taking place on the Thursday. It was expected that it would ban the demo. In the meantime, the Commissions were announcing that they would go ahead with the demo. On the Friday morning members of the Commissions went to see COPCON. At the end of this meeting it was announced that MFA did not object to the demo.

. . . This is a vital event that modifies the relationship of forces in Portugal. The MFA had disagreed with PCP and encouraged the expression of an autonomous workers' power that in the weeks to come would accelerate the revolutionary process in Portugal." (38)

## 8 The Importance of the Demonstration of 7 February 1975

When the delegation from Lisnave boarded the ferries the ticket collectors, in support, refused to collect fares. The article in '*Liberation*' describes the start of the demonstration:-

"Around 1830 hours, the workers from the left bank of the Tagus disembark at Commerce Square. They are in their work clothes,

with red helmets. They carry 'without party' banners with names Lisnave, Setenave, Efacec, National Steel. The stewards have walkie-talkies and red arm-bands; they are all workers. They form a human chain around the demo. In the background, three hundred yards from the shore, is the aircraft carrier 'Saratoga' of the US Navy. The demo is led by a jeep of the military police and a car of the PSP (the riot police). It is dark when it gets to the Rossio (the main square). Other delegations continue to join the compact body that only chants the approved slogans. All observers are struck by the strength the demo conveys - it exemplifies 'proletarian discipline'."

The demonstration was much smaller than the unificade one a fortnight before. Most of the newspapers reported tens of thousands but the numbered estimates range from 15,000 to 40,000. (*O Seculo*, *Diario de Lisboa* and *Diario Noticias*.)

Nevertheless it was considered by many militants as one of the most important demonstrations that they went on, for three reasons. First, as has been described by *Liberation* and others, it exemplified proletarian discipline. There were several speeches given at the end not by individuals but on behalf of workplaces where there had been meetings which approved the text.

Second, this proletarian display politicised the troops.

Palacio from Lisnave tells his part of the story

"The demonstration met police and military officers all along the way. They wanted to discourage or divert us. The demonstration never stopped in spite of different attempts. The army blocked the streets leading to the American Embassy. When we met the army block we stopped. I asked the people through the megaphone whether or not they should advance ... the people would not let themselves be fooled or impeded. So I went to talk to an officer and told him 'the people of the demonstration want to pass'. And so we moved on. When this happened the army re-aligned the armoured cars (*chaimites*) in front of the embassy so that the people could pass in front of

the embassy. . . .

As the demonstrators went past, the commandos turned their backs to the demonstration, turned their weapons on the building and began joining the people in the chanting. The fact that the military joined the people going past on the demonstration was very important." (39)

*Liberation* reported:

"The demo makes its way to the Ministry of Labour. . . which is guarded by another COPCON unit and two companies of the light artillery (RAL-1) . . . Those at the front of the march shout: 'Soldiers on our side'.

Then occurs a scene that helps you understand Portugal today - the soldiers, with portable machine-guns slung around them, turn to the Ministry of Labour, at the same time they raise their fists, to the great applause of the marchers. With clenched fists, workers and soldiers together shout: 'NATO out! National Independence!' People were crying with joy." (40)

Third and, above all, the demonstration of the Inter-Empresas showed the potential of the class as a whole. This initiative was a threat to the PCP and to the ability of the Intersindical to represent those workers. It showed that a section of the proletariat was independent and autonomous, that a working class force existed. More precisely, it weakened the claim the PCP made to the MFA to be the only representative of the Portuguese working class. This eroded the PCP/MFA bond and opened the way to future Povo/MFA Popular developments. The MFA had disagreed with the PCP and favoured the expression of autonomous workers' power. One member of a workers' commission took the arm of the reporter from *Liberation* and told him:

"What we want is workers to take power. Long live the working class!"

It is hardly surprising that Joanna Rollo, of the International Socialists, wrote

"In the Inter-Empresas we see a special type of organisation



which attempts to unite all organised workers and which attempts to lead a fight on behalf of the working class. In all of history there is only one type of organisation which does that. It is the birth of dual power. It is the embryo of the workers' state. Inter-Empresas - Council of Workers' Delegates - Soviet." (41)

On reflection the claims of the birth of dual power and of Soviets were a bit far-fetched. Whilst the actions of the Inter-Empresas flouted the ban and undermined any attempt to impose discipline upon it, it was not an alternative power, more an indication that an alternative was possible. The situation had not produced two opposing powers, between the working class and a reactionary establishment. The very fact that eventually the MFA did not oppose the demonstration deflected the potential polarisation. Nevertheless Rollo, focusing on an independent organisation linking workers' committees, was ready to report the demonstration and perceive the potential significance.

## 9 The PCP and the CTs

Many Marxists maintain that Workers' Councils can only thrive if they are built from below, out of struggle, based on the factory committees. It is therefore necessary to examine what was happening in the workers' commissions (CTs).

Although the CTs were setting the pace the unions were also taking up bread and butter issues. Furthermore the CTs were being increasingly dominated by the PCP. The PCP, now in favour of CTs, did not see the need to have a separate 'Workers' Power'. It organised on the 2nd of

February an ostensibly 'non-party' conference attended by 191 CTs from the whole country. (42)

There had been a massive propaganda battle within Lisnave. *Diario Popular* (6/2/75) reports

"The workers of Lisnave, meeting in general assembly in the Margueira yards, published a communique against the demo and refused to allow their CT to form part of the Inter-Empresas commission."

Despite this defeat, on the day of the demonstration there was a large contingent from Lisnave, possibly as many as half the 8400 strong workforce attended and one of the last speakers was from Lisnave.

After the initial wave of revolutionary and non-party enthusiasm the nature of the struggle had changed. Problems such as unemployment and the flight of capital had come to the forefront and the reformists suggested possible solutions. By now the PCP had developed a strategy of fighting from within and attempting to win over the workers' commissions.

"In this period the PCP took control of the CTs in various enterprises such as Lisnave, Setenave, Siderurgia, Efacec (but this took a long time) and Sorefame. It had the majority of factories. When it took control it allied the CTs with the Intersindical." (43)

Due to their experience of the previous years the union activists in the factories were not altogether absent from the workers' struggles.

Carlos Nunes, who was elected a delegate to the CT of Lisnave in May/June 74, when delegates were first elected after the 'ad hoc' commission, and served on the CT until 1978, described how the PCP

gained control at Lisnave. He was asked 'bearing in mind that the 7th of February should have re-inforced the Revolutionary Left, how did the PCP so easily take the CT?' (44)

"There were about 120-150 people on the CT - from both shipyards. These would be composed of different areas, different workshops, and were difficult to control. The revolutionary left never had a majority on the CT but were able to win the important debates.

The two moments in which the revolutionary left at Lisnave had greatest impact were the 12th of September and the 7th of February. Even before the 7th of February the revolutionary left had started to lose ground - as the PCP started to get more organised.

The PCP had stepped up its level of aggression and repression in factories, even resorting to physical means. The PCP had accused Crespo of being a member of the CIA some time before, but the campaign was stepped up. In the union of the metalworkers in Setubal a member of the UDP was beaten up and burnt with a cigarette end.

After September the 28th the secretariat comprised 6 members of the PCP, 5 UDP and one PS. The PCP had control.

It started with meetings being manipulated so that only PCP members or people on their side were permitted to speak. This got much worse in 1976/77.

The PCP said that an impasse had been reached. It could not work like this. It started to circulate lists of candidates to be supported in election for the secretariat. At that time there was voting by names (as opposed to lists) but the PCP went around with lists of those to be supported, nudging people which way to vote. (45)

So a secretariat was elected comprising six members of the PCP, four from the Socialist Party and one or two of the revolutionary left (which did not include Crespo from the PRP).

After this I did not go to any more meetings of the Inter-Empresas as I could not go as a delegate. One of the reasons the PCP was so antagonistic was that the UDP formally controlled the Inter-Empresas." (46)

Fatima Patriarca observed that the PCP in Lisnave came to be especially prominent from January 1975. In particular it raised the themes of

Nationalisation then Workers' Control. An outside factor was that the part owners of Lisnave - the Swedish based firm called Eriksburg - threatened 1200 redundancies.

"A 'maximalist' counter-initiative was presented by the PRP, strictly speaking the section which the PRP was associated with, which called for

- i More money
- ii Only three levels of payment to be allowed
- iii A tax on firms to improve conditions in the local area of Almada (the firm had been hitherto exempt)."

So what began was a radical conflict between parties and ideologies

"which had not really been reflected in Lisnave before." (47)

## 10 The Parties of the Far Left

The Inter-Empresas is an illustration of how the militants and the revolutionary left could influence events. But it never came any closer to becoming a Lisbon wide workers' council. Partly this was due to the politics and mistakes of the far left activists within the organisation.

In the Inter-Empresas one can discern three positions at least on the question of the role of parties.

The first was anti-party. This saw as the fundamental priority the workers' struggles and organisations and there was no room for any alternatives. Left wing party activists were often seen as 'the problem'. For example one of the delegates to the Inter-Empresas wrote

an article for its bulletin entitled 'Inter-Empresas - What Future?'.

"This concept is clearly opposed to the sectarianism of political organisation which though condemning revisionism in words, in practice creates its own group for Sindical Action, or its own Sindical Oppositions, with the aim of winning leadership in the unions." (48)

Even the Efacec delegation at the meeting of the 2nd of January was divided. Carlos Nunes recalled

"That sort of conflict, between those from Efacec who voted to identify solely with the Inter-Empresas and those with the UDP, was normal at that time."

A member of the UDP recalls that there was a major argument with the Efacec militants within the UDP. Many workers had been attracted to the UDP because it appeared to put non-party class organisation before party interests. However they were becoming disillusioned. It appeared to them that the UDP was seizing on the non-party theme as an opportune way of attacking the PCP, not as a fundamental principle. (49)

The second position was that identified by the first. Certain members of the parties and sects wanted to absorb the Inter-Empresas into their organisations. The Marxist-Leninists, the largest group of political militants within, were coalescing as a party, which in turn was attempting to build a 'democratic front'. For some of them the Inter-Empresas was an organisation that should be amalgamated with the UDP, which they stressed was a democratic front, not a party. As the Marxist-Leninist sects merged from December 1974 onwards, pressure to manipulate and use the Inter-Empresas became stronger. In effect many of those outside the UDP saw the UDP as a political front which was trying to takeover the Inter-Empresas.

Those sympathetic to the UDP stressed that the weakness of Inter-Empresas was precisely its lack of political organisation:

"one of the reasons the Inter-Empresas started weakening is that the revolutionary left had this strong aspiration that you could have workers' control without workers' power and without support from the state apparatus." (50)

Furthermore the times were very political and

"events were moving very quickly and most of us had to consider the wider issues....there was the problem of a few people with a comprehension of the future - we had to go everywhere to make everything; we had no big party, no big front of parties" (51)

The third position was that of a party being necessary because the struggle was to be very political, but the party had to serve the class. This is partially illustrated by the PRP which stressed the need for autonomous organisation of the class and the need for a party. But the PRP in that period did not attempt to recruit openly. It exaggerated the maturity of the class and assumed that the majority would automatically raise demands such as the armed overthrow of the state apparatus. The PRP was sympathetic to the notion of autonomous organisations such as the Inter-Empresas and yet it never made the building of them a political priority. Key battles and issues were abandoned in the name of non-interference. Its conception of building the party was that of building the class and the party thus becoming absorbed in the strengthened class. Because of its lack of demands and its romantic view of the class the PRP was very popular among the most militant non-, and even anti-party elements. The PRP was therefore closer to the first position than the third. There was no group inside the Inter-Empresas which could be closely identified with this third position.

Whatever their position, the activists were agreed over the cause of the demise of the Inter-Empresas, that subjective problems were the main cause of the movement's downfall. Non Marxist-Leninist groups stopped participating with the usual excuse of the sectarianism of the supporters of the UDP.

The UDP comrades from Lisnave emphasised that within the Inter-Empresas "these contradictions amongst small groups were more important than the contradictions in the factories"

The PRP condemned the sectarianism but their condemnations often appeared sectarian because they failed to come up with realistic alternatives. Fierce arguments, polemics, were not only inevitable but also necessary if the 'contradictions in the factories' were to be overcome.

# 11 POSTSCRIPT

The demonstrations of September the 28th and, especially, February the 7th were successes because workers felt that these were concrete actions which many could relate to.

"After the 7th of February many comrades progressively deserted the Inter-Empresas thus weakening one of the vital organs for the organization of the working class struggle and the rest of the oppressed workers." (52)

By March 11th it had in effect ceased to be important. It represented little more than a rump of factories where Marxist-Leninists had some influence. According to Roseta, from the textile union, its decline

started as early as December 1974. The Inter-Empresas was unclear over the unions and afflicted with bitter political differences. Its very base, the CTs, was being eroded due to the growing influence of the PCP. Given these problems it was unable to adapt and respond to political changes.

Structurally the Lisbon based organisation of Inter-Empresas was the embryo of a workers' council yet it never developed into one. The central problem of the Inter-Empresas was its inability to convince those workers who related to the CTs, the PCP, the unions and the military that they needed to create a structure of CTs independent of the MFA and/or the unions and/or the major left parties. After all all of these forces proclaimed that they were on the side of the workers.

In retrospect many participants agree that

"The Inter-Empresas itself never realised its potential, although there were elections to form it. It was more a source of cross information than anything else. Real co-ordinated action never really took place.

The Inter-Empresas participated in demonstrations, came out with statements, this and that. Looking at it honestly it never had the importance that people tended to give to it. It was a place, a way, for people to meet and discuss but in concrete terms it never had a REAL influence on the political situation; it was never strong enough to appear as an alternative to power." (53)

But the Inter-Empresas was important, not only because of what it did, but, first and foremost, because it was a pointer to the strength of the workers' commissions rooted in the factories. It set an example which influenced some of the 'workers' parties. Even before, indeed just before, the February demonstration the PCP organised a supposedly



non-party conference of workers' commissions.

The PRP/BR left the Inter-Empresas but committed itself to founding another workplace-based co-ordinating organisation, the CRTSMs, which are examined in the next chapter.

## 12 Inter-Empresas - References

- 1 Interview with Magalhaes, 1/12/79. \*
- 2 The Vignola dossier refers to *Perspectivas dos Trabalhadores face ao Processo Político* by Cavalheira Antunes, page 71.
- 3 Refer to Vignola dossier, page 122.
- 4 Interview with Roseta, 27/4/84. \*
- 5 Interview with Artur Palacio, 2/8/82. \*
- 6 Interview with Fernanda, 30/4/84. \*
- 7 Interview with Carlos Nunes, 4/6/84. \*
- 8 Interview with Artur Palacio, 2/8/82. \*
- 9 Interview with Henrique Guerreiro 1/5/84. \*
- 10 Interview with Acacio Barreiros.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Interview with Carlos Nunes, 4/6/84. \*
- 13 Interview with Roseta, 27/4/84. \*
- 14 In December 1975 the three groups, ORPC(ML)+PCP(ML) + FEC(ML), combined to launch the PCP(R). For a resume of these initials, and brief notes, refer to the glossary.
- 15 Refer to the article by Martins and Loureiro in *Historia*, March 1980, on the Marxist-Leninist left, page 19.
- 16 Despite some effort it has not been possible to find either the bulletin or the follow up article.
- 17 Interview with Moco, 31/4/84. \*
- 18 Patriarca, *Análise Social*, no 51, page 666.
- 19 Dated 2/1/75.
- 20 Interview with Fatima Patriarca, 1/9/80. \*; refer also to her article "Operarios da Lisnave de 12 Sept. 1974", *Análise Social*, no number 56, page 726.
- 21 Interview with Artur Palacio, 2/8/82. \*
- 22 Interview with TAP worker, 5/8/82. \*
- 23 This section was reproduced in *Voz do Povo*, number 28, 11th of February, 1986.
- 24 Harman, *The Lost Revolution*, pages 70 and 71.
- 25 Interview with Artur Palacio 2/8/82. \*
- 26 Interview with Jose Sousa, 29/4/84. \*
- 27 Interview with Artur Palacio 2/8/82. \*
- 28 Interview with TAP worker, 5/8/82. \*
- 29 Mailer page 150 give the list of workplaces which is similar to other cited lists. On the same page Mailer mistakenly claims that the Inter-Empresas was set up in January 1975 (on the initiative of Efacec-Inel).
- 30 Refer to pages 39-42 of selected *Jornal da Greve* bulletins, written by workers from Efacec/Inel.
- 31 Interview with Carlos Nunes, 4/6/84. \*
- 32 Interview with Fernando Silva, 30/8/82. \*
- 33 Interview with TAP worker, 5/8/82. \*
- 34 Interview with Carlos Nunes, 4/6/84. \*
- 35 Text, in various publications e.g. *Voz do Povo* 11/2/75, issue 28. I have used the translation by Rollo, refer to note 41.

- 36 The article from the French weekly '*LIBERATION*' was republished in '*Portugal a Blaze of Freedom*' by *Big Flame*, June 1975.
- 37 The Socialist Party and PRP communiques at Lisnave are reproduced in Volume 2, *O 25 Abril e as Lutas Sociais nas Empresas*, pages 127 and 128.
- 38 Refer to *Liberation* and also *Capital*, 6/2/75.
- 39 Interview with Artur Palacio, 2/8/82. \*
- 40 The article from the French weekly '*LIBERATION*' was republished in '*Portugal a Blaze of Freedom*' by *Big Flame*, June 1975.
- 41 Joanna Rollo, 'One Year After the Coup', *International Socialism Journal*, April 1975, number 77, page 16.
- 42 A report of the conclusions was published as *Conferencia Nacional Unitaria de Trabalhadores - Conclusoes*.
- 43 Lisnave workers in round table discussion; including Artur Palacio and Fernando Figueira, 2/8/82. \*
- 44 Note that the CT in Lisnave was called a CDT - Commission to Defend Workers.
- 45 The PRP response was to not solicit votes for its own candidates; the idea being that the workforce and the democratic process would be the best judge.
- 46 Interview with Fernando Figueira, 2/8/82. \*
- 47 Interview with Fatima Patriarca, 1/9/80. \*. Also refer to her article in *Analise Social*, no 51 1977.
- 48 Originally an article in the Inter-Empresas bulletin, 'Inter-Empresas, What Future?' and reprinted as 'The Struggle of Inter-Empresas against Opportunism', *Combate*, 1/7/75.
- 49 Interview with Joao Carlos Espada, 28/4/84. \*
- 50 Interview with TAP worker, 5/8/82. \*
- 51 Interview with Fernando Silva, 30/8/82. \*
- 52 Article in the Inter-Empresas bulletin, 'Inter-Empresas, What Future?', *op cit*.
- 53 Interview with Fernando Silva, 30/8/82. \*

## THE CRTSMS

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## 1 Origins

CRTSMs stands for *Conselhos Revolucionarios de Trabalhadores, Soldados e Marinheiros*; translated this means the Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors.

Where the Inter-Empresas had tried to co-ordinate the actions of and to organise workers' committees, the CRTSMs made the first major attempt to unite workers with soldiers in a non-party organisation. Like the Inter-Empresas it was an effort to unite on a class basis, but representation was to include delegates from barracks. It was said that soldiers were workers in uniform.

The main instigators were the PRP/BR. The comrades used assumed names. One was called CRAC which means "one of the lads". He subsequently became a leading member and spoke on behalf of their organisation at the conference of the International Socialists in the UK in June 1975. Shortly after this he had a series of disagreements with the leadership and was forced out of it. He explained how the CRTSMs fitted into the PRP's ideology.

"The idea was born in 1905. The idea of supporting and setting up, if possible, autonomous workers' organisations, was a basic principle of the PRP. A lot of discussion developed around that topic at the founding conference. The idea was that workers themselves should take power, giving the party a different role from that of the Communist Party in Russia. Even though that role was never clearly defined."

Crac stressed:

"The idea of the CRTSMs had a three fold goal

- 1 They were to be a solution to the PRP's union question.
- 2 They were an alternative to the elections; a continuation of the abstentionist stand of the PRP.
- 3 They were an attempt to find new forms of organisation to correspond with the new forms of struggle that were cropping up at the time." (1)

Crac's first two points, regarding the trade union question and the elections, will be pursued later in this chapter.

Given the PRP's efforts to find new forms of organisation it is not surprising that

"the leadership of the PRP followed with interest the developments within the Inter-Empresas. I remember discussing the Inter-Empresas at leadership meetings; I think this was at the end of 1974." (2)

The stagnation of the Inter-Empresas was important. If the Inter-Empresas had been more powerful and able, for example, to respond to March 11th, it is unlikely that the PRP leadership would have felt there was space to launch the CRTSMs. Manual Crespo was sent along to a meeting of the Inter-Empresas. Crespo, at the time aged 32, was a welder, and had been simultaneously a worker priest at the Lisnave shipyards where he was very well known. He proposed that the Inter-Empresas help set up the CRTSMs. This was not well received. After that the PRP played no part in what was left of the Inter-Empresas. (3)

It was only in this period that the PRP started recruiting on some scale and putting down roots in factories and barracks. By Easter of 1975 the national leadership had incorporated militants from Lisnave and Marinha Grande. Accounts deliberately stress the importance of the Marinha

Grande links. The history of Marinha Grande is important, almost legendary.

Marinha Grande is a small industrial town, about 100 km north of Lisbon. The main factories manufacture glass. On 18th of January 1934 there was a National General Strike. The workers at Marinha Grande appropriated weapons from the local barracks of the GNR and then captured the post office and raised the Red Flag over the Town Hall. They even set up a short lived SOVIET - the first in Portugal. Within a few days Salazar had crushed the uprising, killing many workers. But the struggle of Marinha Grande lived on in memories. (4)

"The PRP had a very good militant from Marinha Grande who was then meeting (regularly) with the leadership. He was in one of the glass factories." (5)

The following explanation of how the CRTSMs started was published in *Republica* (23/7/75). Two members of the provisional secretariat were interviewed:

"The revolutionary councils began to be discussed on 11 March 1975 in Marinha Grande at a workers' mobilisation. It was called by various political organisations alarmed by the lack of a political context which could give a lead to the people to respond to the attacks by the reactionaries.

Some comrades then went to Leira, where they discussed the political situation with soldiers from the barracks. They vowed to continue this discussion until they could work out what action was to be taken and against whom. From there they began to discuss the forms of organisation which the workers needed to stop any new reactionary attacks. These comrades were in fact militants of the PRP/BR who then went to Lisbon to let the party know about these actions." (6)

This interview in *Republica* tends to explain the rise in a neat linear fashion starting from small beginnings - a few workers with ideas - who then went to a few factories - then to the barracks - all the parties

set up a council - the workers then went to the PRP (which they happened to be members of) - which decided it was good idea - then suggested to other workers to get on with the idea.

"The first proposal for the creation of the Revolutionary Councils arose from a meeting of Workers promoted by the PRP on 11th and 12th of April." (7)

According to the *Republica* article (23/7/75)

"On April 11th and 12th a plenary session was held with representatives of around 50 enterprises and some military units to discuss this form of organisation. A secretariat of nine people was established with the intention of holding a congress on 19th and 20th of April."

But the decision to launch the CRTSMs was not made at the Marinha Grande meeting on April 11th and 12th. The entire front page of 10th of April issue of *Revolucão* and most of page 3 were dedicated to

"Revolutionary Councils are the priority of the day."

Some agitation in workplaces had taken place before the preliminary conference. The article quoted other attempts to raise the idea:

"In the National broadcasting service, also there is a process of election among the workers for the constitution of a revolutionary council which will include militants of various parties and the non-aligned. The same happens in Radio Clube Portugues. And also in Lisnave it seems likely to happen." (8)

The initiative was meant to transcend political parties:-

"This form of organisation, which arose from the workers' base, is once again counter-posing itself to the sectarianism of the party *cupulas* (cliques)... This proposal was also accepted and carried out by militants from the base of the Communist Party although its leadership is against it. It is sad that its leadership is against it, and it deserves 'self criticism' because these revolutionary councils mean that there is unity of workers at the base, which overcomes party affiliations." (9)

The PRP did not want to be seen as fronting the proposal; it wanted it to appear to emanate directly from the working class. The underplaying



of the connection with the PRP meant that its public reports unduly accentuated convenient factors such as

- 1) necessity following March 11th and
- 2) the "self" activity of working people who were taking up the issue in their workplaces, and in particular, Marinha Grande.

This made it more difficult to see the inter-relationship between workers' councils and a revolutionary organisation. What was really at stake was not who originated the idea but whether the notion of a national non-party network of militants in the factories and barracks could be generated from above and coalesced sufficiently to become an alternative power.

## 2 The First Conference

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### .21 The Context

The weekend of 19th and 20th of April, of the first CRTSM's conference, saw some of the biggest political meetings yet. For this was the last weekend before the first elections with a universal franchise ever to be held in Portugal. Hundreds of thousands of people attended meetings.

All the major pre-election rallies were bigger, even more than ten times bigger, than this conference. It took place in a Lisbon theatre. It was

reported that 660 people attended. The main interest of this minor sideshow is its message and its politics. Only at this meeting was an alternative power system considered, one which was intended to be based upon a national network of workers' councils.

It was the only meeting which was not about who and what to vote for. Although called because of the imminent elections its starting point was the ability of and need for workers to organise, themselves. This was an attempt to establish an alternative to bourgeois democracy. The headline of that week's edition of *Revolucao* was VOTE FOR REVOLUTIONARY COUNCILS - for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The fact that the CRTSM's conference was, in theory, a meeting of delegates invalidates direct numerical comparison with other meetings.

But it must not be forgotten that there was another, considerable, force, though it focussed less on the working class, that was very concerned to establish an alternative to the 'traditional' political parties. Sections of the MFA, such as the cultural 'dynamization' department of the 5th Division and individuals too, like Otelo and Coutinho, increasingly argued that a blank vote would be a vote of criticism of "bourgeois" political parties. (10)

Later, in May and June, these two strands converge.

.21 The Conference Platform

Of the documents issued by the conference the Platform is the most succinct. The first 10 paragraphs are reproduced here and other sections are quoted later.

"THE PLATFORM OF THE CRTSM's.

1. March 11 has come and gone and it is now clear that little or no class organisation exists to counter a probable reactionary coup. The Workers' Committees (*ie the Inter-Empresas - my note*), after February 7, entered an impasse, having reached the height of their bargaining power.
2. The spectre of unemployment now haunts the workers and deters them from making demands. This fact has allowed control to be taken over by reformists in several enterprises.
3. Reformism, having gained a foothold in some military and civilian structures, will be able to introduce reforms which may stabilise the situation in the short run. These reforms will never offer any solution in the medium or long term.
4. Military power is divided into three factions: left, right and undecided.
5. Real political power is in the hands of the military, among whom there are various tendencies which could veer to the left or to the right, or which could be re-inforced by the undecided, present in large numbers in the armed forces.
6. Imperialism is not prepared to lose the strategic position it holds in our country, and it fears the impact our revolutionary process may have on Western European countries where the proletariat is more advanced.
7. A confrontation with imperialism is inevitable fairly soon. Its overthrow is impossible given the existing structure of the Army. Nor can it be overthrown by the party cliques ("cupulas").
8. The battle against imperialism requires an armed class organisation.
9. The class organisation is born out of autonomous organs of struggle, out of committees united at the base, elected within the class.
10. Such an organisation will be born primarily in the factories and work-places where there are concrete struggles against the bosses. Different levels of organisation in the various

localities will correspond to the different levels of consciousness." (11)

.23 Soviets?

This is what a soldier from the barracks of Caldas da Rainha thought of the conference

"My first impression was that the CRTSM's were a strong, good, organisation which united differing forces. I was an observer at that conference and it was the first meeting like that I had been to." (12)

One of the organisers of this conference was a comrade who chose to call himself Carlos. In spite of his youth he was mentally mature. When Portugal was under Salazar he had gone to live in Britain and was instrumental in establishing an International branch of the Transport and General Workers Union, had helped found the Portuguese Solidarity Committee and was active alongside the International Socialists. He told Christopher Reed, of the *Guardian* (21/4/75) that:

"We will be setting up councils this week in companies and district areas and also barracks. At first we will concentrate on the more advanced workers' areas eventually moving into the depressed rural parts.

We will aim eventually to arm the working class by taking the initiative in the control and distribution of weapons. In the progress of the Socialist Revolution this would be under Soviets. . . .

The revolutionary council solution was the only one . . . . the political parties, all quoting Socialist jargon were hopelessly divided by petty partisan struggles."

The majority of those attending had little doubt that they were in the process of creating Soviets. Many of the Portuguese papers, busy covering the pre-election meetings, barely mentioned the conference. Of the British papers only the *Guardian* (21/4/75) gave it more than a

mention. Christopher Reed reported:

"WORKERS PLAN CONTROL SOVIET STYLE

Workers' delegates from 150 major companies and organisations in Portugal, and officers and men of the armed forces, are to form revolutionary councils with 'the eventual aim of arming the working class.' The councils, which will evolve into regional 'Soviets' composed of soldiers, peasants and workers along the lines of 1918 revolutionary Russia (13), will first direct their energies to the administrative control of industry. They will also seek to restructure the armed forces by abolishing the officer class and forming a 'peoples army' with elected leaders...."

.24 The Turnout.

The nature of the conference differentiates it from the other meetings of the weekend. While the size of the turnout was important for propaganda purposes the conference cannot be compared with that of the rallies that were taking place. This was no rally. The attendance was 660. (*Revolucão* 23/3/75)

Comrade Crac had been responsible for the technical organisation such as renting the room, printing, distributing paperwork, security etc. He said

"We were pleased with the attendance but that was not meaningful. It was based on the material capacity for organising that the party provided. It was based on and gave a lead to propaganda and the militancy of some elements of the PRP.

....This figure of 660 in attendance is overblown. Perhaps 400 was the most at any one time. Possibly 660 attended altogether during the 2 days."

.241 Workplace attendance.

The published report lists representatives from 161 workplaces and barracks and, most significantly, 21 military units. A number of the soldiers wore uniform, as the press and the organisers were quick to note. Members of the military were meant to be above party politics and the military authorities did not permit them to officially participate. (Of course the CRTSMs were to argue that this was not party politics.) Military representation included several air force units and also the Guarda Nacional Republica (GNR), usually regarded as the former dictatorship's most loyal supporter. One COPCON officer was there.

Workers from most of the major factories were present. The list includes Lisnave, Setenave, branches of CUF, TAP, Standard Electrica (part of STC), Sorefame, Lusalite (an important textile plant), etc. (14) Most of these workplaces had taken part in some form or other of industrial struggle. This figure of 161 includes representatives of unions and, incidentally, players from the Portuguese Football Association.

.242 The turnout from political parties.

Isabel do Carmo spoke from the platform on behalf of the PRP. All the political parties to the left of the Socialist Party had been invited but the only group other than the PRP to send representatives was Base-FUT (*Movimento BASE-Frente Unitaria de Trabalhadores* - one of the smaller left-wing groups). The MRPP sent observers. There had been discussion in MES about participating. A number of non-Portuguese revolutionary groups were represented. Representation from Africa

included the PAIGC and MPLA. The Europeans included Lotta Continua from Italy and the IS from the UK. An important reason for the IS building solidarity with and for the PRP, to the exclusion of any other party, was the belief that 'the PRP was in the process of building workers' councils'.

#### .243 Delegates?

The nature of the turnout is crucial insofar as it gives an indication of roots within working class organisations, implying an alternative power. It was usually claimed and reported that those attending the conference were delegates. A delegate conference would carry more weight. However the conference report notes attendance by "workplaces, organisations and barracks with workers present".

Nine years later I was told by those organising the credentials that this blurring was intentional

"We passed the paper around and collected this form that people filled in. Then we could say that so and so attended and that such-and-such firms were represented.

That was the way we managed to suggest a representative basis which the conference did not have." (15)

Nevertheless there seems to have been much less of a distinction between delegates from a workplace and representing a workplace. The movement in Portugal had little tradition of formal delegations and written credentials. In addition the speed of events would not be conducive to such things. A militant from the PRP explained (in those times)

"it was easy to send delegates because if you were in a CT all you had to do was to tell them there was a good



meeting. . . .or if a PRP comrade was in a CM the comrade would tell the people (the CM) that there was a meeting and it was necessary to go there to know about the situation, to find out what was happening." (16)

As one of the provisional secretariat said

"there were very few proper delegates because of the lack of time and because the general elections were taking place simultaneously". (17)

## .25 Concrete Demands

The platform of the conference stated that the immediate tasks were these:

- "1. The explanation of the political military and economic situation in our country by revolutionary worker-militants.
2. Immediate elections of Revolutionary Councils in all work-places, barracks and housing estates.
3. The strengthening of relationship between the workers and revolutionary soldiers."

One is struck by the general nature of these proposals. Their content is primarily that of propaganda and understanding, not concrete objectives which workplaces could take up. There is nothing to be won or lost, no suggestion of possible compromises. This is in part explained in Section two, part four, of the objectives, which argues that the task of each Revolutionary Council is to define the concrete and immediate objectives in each locality. But the majority of concrete demands are not within the scope of the revolutionary committees, because

- "10. Such an organisation will be born primarily in the factories and work-places where there are concrete struggles against the bosses. Different levels of organisation in the various localities will correspond to the different levels in consciousness.

11. The Revolutionary Councils are not against (nor do they wish to substitute themselves for) the Factory Committees. The Committees have a role in formulating demands, whereas, the Revolutionary Councils are a more advanced form, directly political, and having the aim of taking power."

There is one practical task which is emphasised time and again, that is

"The battle against imperialism requires an armed class organisation..... To organise and arm the class, urgently, ..... To form a truly revolutionary proletarian army..... To organise for the taking and exercise of power by the working class."

The CRTSMs, along with the PRP/BR, became identified as an organisation concerned with the distribution of arms and even armed insurrection.

This was a concrete issue. But when it came to a related one of organising within the barracks, there were no real demands, not even for "removing decorations, rank, insignia, and so on". (18)

## .26 The Organisational Formula

In April 20, 1975, the conference approved a motion containing the following points:

1. Constitution of a 50 member Secretariat for the Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors.
2. Congress elected the following elements:  
11 engineering workers; 1 electronics worker; 1 cutter; 1 office worker; 1 teacher; 1 hotel trades employee; 1 printing worker; 1 unemployed person; 11 military personnel (privates and officers).
3. Besides the above the following will make up the secretariat:  
2 delegated from the North; 1 from Viana do Castelo; 2 from Marinha Grande; 1 from Covilha; 2 from Alentejo and Algarve.
4. Parties and workers' movements, the left of the Socialist

Party included, are invited to send a delegate to represent them on the Provisional National Secretariat.

.... ALL DECISIONS TO BE APPROVED BY MAJORITY."

On a wry note Phil Mailer observes

"the PRP/BR decided this was the form of organisation most appropriate for the workers in general. They were mesmerized by the word 'council'... the PRP were advocating a particular brand of institution. Living reality had to be poured into the moulds of the past."

The conference spent a great deal of time considering organisational form, indeed Mailer stresses

"it is alarming to see the details with which organisational forms had been thought out" (19)

However Mailer then attributes a proposed four-tier structure to this conference. That four-tiered proposal arose at the second conference of July/August 1975.

#### .27 The Ability to Implement Decisions.

This is how Carlos Nunes, delegate to the workers' commission at Lisnave, reported the possibility of implementing the CRTSM's proposals at Lisnave:-

"There had been some discussion in workplaces before the first congress but no formal representations from Lisnave. There were many from Lisnave who were connected with the PRP and also a lot who were not directly connected. The PRP had over 20 militants in Lisnave at this time.... Perhaps 30 or 40 workers from Lisnave went.

Following the congress I discussed the proposal within my section at work and it was well received." (20)

The vast majority of those present were not delegates from their

workers' commissions. As already mentioned the soldier from Caldas da Rainha was only an observer at the conference. The issue is not so much 'delegate' or 'observer' but what somebody like him could take up in his barracks.

"At that time there was no real contact between rank and file soldiers from the barracks and workers outside. The main political activity was the distribution of nationally printed literature, literature especially for the barracks, and intervention in the assemblies. We tried to be concrete. We went for anything we could go for. . .

The barracks comprised six companies of 115 people. Each company was divided into four platoons. Many of the soldiers were not trained in the use of arms. The PRP demanded, in response to March 11th, that one platoon of armed volunteers be assembled and if necessary, mobilised, to help the local population, and, if necessary, attack the fascists. The commander of the regiment, who probably had Socialist Party sympathies, acceded to the demand. There were two PRP comrades in this platoon." (21)

In this case it is more than probable that the idea of revolutionary councils was discussed back in the barracks. There was a rapid increase in PRP influence and membership after the conference, but also after March 11th.

"I had contact with militants of the PRP in barracks before March 11th for some time but I did not know they were of the PRP. I joined the PRP after March 11th. When I joined there were five militants in the barracks. After three months there were twenty, two of whom were officers." (22)

Most of those present would have discussed the conference. It had a certain élan. It was a dramatic alternative to the issue of the day - the elections. Given the political ferment this idea of workers' councils, 'soviets', would have had some repercussion, perhaps on workers' commissions, possibly in assemblies and probably amongst immediate workmates.

At certain periods there could be a vast gulf between enthusiasm and achievement. This was sorely demonstrated by the events of November 25th. A greater emphasis on the delegate structure would have diminished the immediate impact but may have lessened this gap between rhetoric and punch.

#### .28 The Role of the PRP.

The PRP had gone to great lengths to stress the non-party nature of the conference and how the idea for Soviets arose from workers' own initiatives. Despite professed independence the conference attendance list correlates markedly with those workplaces where the PRP had members and sympathisers. It was stressed that this organisation, not the PRP, was the embryo of a new political party:

"The CRTSMs should be seen as the embryo of the truly revolutionary Party, as the vanguard of the class in the building of socialism." (23)

Nevertheless everybody knew and saw them as a PRP venture. The PRP was being assessed and tested.

Neither the PRP nor the CRTSMs put up or supported candidates in the elections. They did precisely the opposite. They argued that people should not vote. This was the PRP's electoral intervention. Of the revolutionary left only LUAR and the PRP were not presenting candidates on the grounds that elections were 'bourgeois'. So the vast majority of worker militants active in political parties would have been too busy to attend a two day conference five days before the first 'free' elections

ever.

Other parties and groups were denounced by the conference for their 'legalism and electoralism'. For the thousands of militants who were sympathetic to the concepts of workers' councils but involved in electioneering, such statements prevented their working in the CRTSMs.

The conference concluded that 'no matter what the result of the elections, they will not solve the class's basic problems' and 'in the present situation there is an urgent need for the creation of revolutionary councils as the only means by which the proletariat can take power.'

An idea was born but given the overwhelming pull of the elections it is hardly surprising that the infant was deprived of oxygen.

### 3 Preliminary Organisation

The Provisional Secretariat was established in an office in the 'Proletarian University', a building that had been requisitioned by the PRP. It resolved:

"to re-inforce the campaign at the national level, and in the press also, at the level of organisations of the masses."

Many of these meetings drew audiences from the geographical locality and were not limited to specific workplaces. There are reports of a big

general meeting held in Porto on the 10th of May, openly attended by soldiers and sailors in uniform. (24)

In some areas residents' commissions were also affiliated e.g. Porto (CRM), Chaves, Castelo Branco. (25) In those instances the CRTSMs adapted themselves and joined in with the attempts of the CMs to unite. (This was an adaption insofar as the Councils were seen as workers' councils with their base and strength in the organisation of the workplace, not as general meetings of workers, even of workers who were active in the battle for better housing and living conditions.)

Several of the conference documents were published and distributed. Press interviews and conferences were organised, meetings were held and of course there was press coverage of these meetings. Manuel Crespo had been elected the provisional secretary of the CRTSMs. *Expresso* of May 17th quotes Crespo reporting on a typical *plenario* (meeting) of the CRTSM's secretariat:

"We should start by making the CRTs the organisation of the Portuguese people, an organisation which can exercise power, an organisation in which everyone has a say. In each factory the workers should get together to discuss problems and to elect bodies which will implement what the workers want."

Within days the CRTSMs' secretariat managed to get its proposal debated almost simultaneously in two of the most important forums of that moment, the MFA assembly and a mass meeting of Lisnave workers.

#### 4 The MFA assembly discusses the CRTSMs

What distinguished the PRP plan from other attempts to co-ordinate workers' commissions was that it had some base, on the left of the MFA, in the armed forces. The PRP/BR placed great emphasis upon its military legacy when it was a clandestine organisation. Its emblem included a weapon. The emphasis on building an autonomous non-party organisation would have appeared attractive to some of the army officers. Otelo was looking for political guidance and he started turning to the PRP from early 1975.

On May 20th the newly 'democratised' MFA held one of its monthly assembly meetings. A certain army captain, Nuno Ferreira, one of the officers of the 25th of April and a member of the provisional secretariat of the CRTSMs, stood up and spoke. His intervention was made on behalf of COPCON and became known as the Pro-COPCON 'POPULAR POWER' Document. His opening words were

"The organised working class and the MFA are undeniably the driving force on the road to socialism. . .

Socialism is the only alternative to the present situation. Autonomous demonstrations and the organisation of power at the base have been decisive factors in the development of the revolutionary process. We remember the example of February 7th (1975) and the occupations of houses and land, both of which were supposed to be supported by the MFA. But the lack of any clear defined programme has allowed the MFA occasionally to be manipulated by various political parties" (28)

This was the first appeal in the MFA assembly for the 'Revolutionary Councils' proposal, which included

"unconditional and total support for the election of class



bodies which would be revolutionary and democratic"

and this was in the context of the

"workers' power in all places of work and wherever decisions are taken"

I asked two military officers, both members of MES and attached to the Fifth Division, for their impressions about the debate. The Fifth Division, in addition to having a delegate, played a crucial role in the MFA assembly as it was responsible for the preparation of meetings and drawing up of the agendas. They clearly remembered the Ferreira speech in the MFA. Despite his emphasis upon class, and not party organisation

"He was very much accused of being a Trojan horse of the PRP. People, mostly associated with the PCP, stood up and attacked him. Although the proposal was not voted on it was very much discussed. It was before the CDRs. (*The CDRs are described in section six of this chapter*). There was very much the feeling that something should be done. Hence the PCP came back fast with their proposal. . . .

At that time the PRP did not have a very strong representation in the MFA assembly but it was very militant. They were few but made a lot of noise. . . . they triggered the discussion." (27)

The proposal generated enormous animosity. According to the CRTSMs their interventions 'revealed the contradictions of power and the manoeuvres of the right and the reformists.'

Nuno Ferreira was shortly to be 'saneado', cleansed, from the assembly. Joao Oliveira was subjected to an enquiry and demoted to reserves (retired compulsorily).

"I have no doubt that the enquiry was motivated by his known liaison with the PRP. The authorities said it was not political but undoubtedly it was. The accusation against him was that he had participated in assemblies at Lisnave (on 21st of May) and Siderurgia. It may be that at that time his participation was not authorised. His demotion was not the consequence of a general witch-hunt of the left in army, more

due to a juggling of forces. Oliveira was very well known as being linked to PRP." (28)

## 5 Lisnave Supports the CRTSMs

The first meeting in Lisnave, on May 21st, to discuss the aims of the revolutionary councils was reported in *Revolucão*, number 41, 06/06/75.

There were about six hundred workers present.

At this meeting

"At the presiding table were three workers, one soldier and one officer, members of the secretariat of the CRTSM. . . .

Amongst the subjects discussed were nationalisation, the battle for production and its realisation in a socialist society, the crises of the system and the non stabilization of bourgeois democracy, the need for the creation of the CRTSM and its advancement for a really proletarian revolutionary government. In this respect there was a debate with some maoist comrades who argued that the priority was the reconstruction of the party. . . .

In the analysis of the political situation in Portugal, which is one of crisis, we have to give an immediate reply to capitalism and imperialism. This response can only be given by the organised working class. But this organisation is not by means of the reconstruction of the great party as some comrades understand it. Rather the working class can respond by creating a unitary organisation of all uniformed and non uniformed workers in revolutionary councils." (29)

Carlos Antunes of the PRP presented the proposal. The 'reconstruction of the great party' referred to the groups within the UDP front. The PRP wished to differentiate itself from the substitutionism, both of the Maoists and of the reformists such as the Socialist Party and PCP. (30)

A not so-rosy account of the meeting is offered by a veteran militant from the UDP, Palacio:

"it was nothing much. It never got support from many people. There were meetings devised to discuss other things and the PRP people would present the question, the objective of forming a CRT (*Revolutionary workers' council - a workplace unit of the CRTSMs*) in the middle of the meeting and so people became a bit suspicious of that project. . .

The PRP talked very well but in practice did not do very much. We had our differences with the PRP; it was too anarcho-sindicalist.

When the PRP called a meeting it would have been alone if it had not been for the support of the UDP." (31)

Carlos Nunes, the PRP comrade from the Rocha yards, put it this way:

"While the meeting approved the proposal it never led to anything because of the PCP gaining control. (It already had control of the secretariat of 12 people - the majority of whom were PCP).

It was possible to get it raised because the control of the PCP was not total and it was still possible to have workers' democracy. There were more than a hundred delegates to the CT at Lisnave. They came from different areas, different workshops, and were difficult to control." (32)

## 6 CRTSMs versus the CDRs

About the same time a rather similar project, that of creating Committees to Defend the Revolution (CDR), was being voiced. Admiral Rosa Coutinho discussed it in the press on May 16th. Derived from the Cuban model, the plan was to establish CDRs, to 'make concrete the alliance between the people and the MFA'. Spurred by the CRTSMs discussion, and perhaps by the relative headway made by the Lisnave

meeting, the PCP harnessed non-party 'progressives' to sponsor the scheme. The PCP had a long tradition of using non-members to propose what were PCP-devised schemes. A number of Fifth Division officers counted the PCP as a firm ally but denied having formal links with the Communist Party. The spokesman for air force Captain Paulino protested:

"I have never in my life spoken with a leader of a political party. And they say that I am a communist! And as I am one of those responsible for the information section, they say that everyone is like me, that all my comrades are communist! What has happened is the class struggle. The MFA is on the side of the movements which support the workers. And the Communist Party is on that side." (33)

At a special fifteen hour meeting of the MFA Delegates Assembly on 25th of May the whole future of the movement's relation to the political parties was once more debated. It was at this meeting that the CDRs and CRTs were contraposed. There was a sharp debate about the two proposals.

"The CDR's tried to escape some of criticism directed against the CRTSMs. This was

- 1 it was created by a political party
- 2 it asked for the army to put itself at the service of an organisation created by this party
- 3 it demanded that all the MFA, in fact all grades of the army, should put themselves under the dominion of CRTSMs

The PCP, although it tended to dominate the CDRs, started from the opposite point of view. It argued for an army based organisation dominated by loyal members of the MFA in which civilians could participate and be properly subordinate. It too tried to avoid the criticism by pretending it was not a party organisation but based on the MFA." (34)

The CRTSMs argued that the CDRs were 'in no way a form of class organisation but rather a form of class division.' It consisted of self-appointed, self invited nominees. It would tend to consolidate those in power rather than promote local peoples' power. (35)

Officers like the two quoted were acutely aware of the unique role that

had been and could be played by radical officers. The CRTSMs were accused of 'mechanical' class analysis

"The Leftist tendency, the brigadists, identified outside social classes with the organisation of the army in the barracks. This was a mechanical identification in which troops were the proletariat, sergeants and the lower officers the petty bourgeoisie, and generals the bourgeois. So one had to put the whole structure into the hands of the regular troops with no ranks..the privates, the "readies".

Their view was that the barracks were good enough for one thing, only to distribute arms to proletariat at the right time. But there was no proletariat to take them." (36)

Although the CDRs were seen as voluntary organisations Soares still said of the communists and their military allies

"the ideological dressing varied, but the intention remained the same: to impose, by dictatorship if necessary, a revolution which the people did not want." (37)

Wherever the Communist Party had militants CDRs were established. They were the means by which the MFA progressives could keep in touch with the movement for 'poder popular' and also as a reaction to the CRTSMs proposal.

One of the most radical barracks was that of the Military Police (RPM).

In a round-table discussion the following question was asked

*"When the CDRs appeared and the CRTSMs appeared what did you think?"*

There was a certain tradition and practice in the regiment and it was anti-CDR. We thought it had made many mistakes. I remember a guy in a factory. He turned up at work with the CDR-inspired constitution which said that the CDR was open to everybody who wanted to belong to it in the plant. It was almost a bible; they had to swear an oath to it. So I told him that, according to me, to defend the factory there was one important condition. To be a worker at that factory. The way to defend it was by means of the assemblies (*mass meetings*) and people would gain confidence by being able to choose. The CDRs imbued a certain lack of confidence. It could be a mere form of control, another mechanism.

In this context we risk considering the Military Police in isolation. The political position was changing due to the criticism of CMs and workers, and actions which they saw to be correct or not correct. Within the assemblies all kept their positions because they were attached to certain political parties but those positions were diluted in practice. This happened many times.

When the CDR appeared we did not know what it was. We could be personally against it but as it was not institutionalised we did not know the role it could have, so we let it go." (38)

Much to consternation of the CRTSMs the two proposals were often lumped together.

## 7 With a Bit of Help from Officers

Ramiro Correia, the head of the Fifth Division, prided himself on his revolutionary ideology. He had edited a book of Portuguese revolutionary songs in Russian and sponsored a text 'Who are the people and who are not?', reproduced from a PCP publication. (*Financial Times*, 20/6/75). At the MFA assembly on the 26th of May he expressed once again his preference for banning parties and placing the MFA above them. The proposal was again rebuffed but the feeling of the need to be non-party, or above parties, remained. All the time the debate about the form of 'revolutionary councils' was raging the crisis of government was gathering speed. A split was occurring within the MFA but those on the left, such as the fifth division officers, were open minded. They were prepared to participate in CDR and CRTSMs discussions.

The press reported a showpiece joint venture, a meeting that took place on 11th of June 1975 in Monsanto, an air force base on the outskirts of Lisbon. The air force was the least radical wing of the armed forces, which made the meeting especially significant. Benjamin Formigo, military correspondent for *EXPRESSO*, wrote a full page report (13/6/75) entitled:

"FIRST JOINT DISCUSSION ABOUT REVOLUTIONARY COUNCILS"

In attendance were officers, sergeants, troops of the three branches of the armed forces and workers from various enterprises such as Lisnave, Setenave, Siderurgia and Marinha Grande.

This was the first such meeting in a barracks. It started with 'clarifications' by workers of *Republica* on the current state of their dispute. Sobral Costra (an independent leftist from the MFA) opened the meeting by saying

"The theme to be discussed in this assembly today is one of the projects to link the Povo/MFA, namely the one which is referred to as the Revolutionary Councils."

Captain Joao Freire spoke about the links of the CRTSMs with the PRP/BR. It was the view of the PRP that

"It was time to pass to a new phase, a phase in which it is possible to have autonomous councils.... The MFA itself believed that the way was not socialising but socialist... it was urgent to create an organisation of workers which could make socialism a reality."

Manuel Crespo from the CRTSMs spoke on the importance of a meeting inside a barracks. He also stressed that the Revolutionary Council of the MFA recognised that not it, itself, but the working masses were the motor of the revolution.

A Captain Luz (close to MES) spoke on behalf of the fifth division army section, which was one of the organising sources of the meeting. (39)

Carlos Antunes spoke as a member of the PRP and talked about Otelo putting COPCON to serve the working classes. There was a section on residents' struggles introduced by a Setubal resident. The meeting lasted more than five hours.

"In conclusion Sobral Costa talked about the importance of the meeting, and the unity which was such a feature of the meeting." (40)

In the shifting and juggling that was taking place Otelo, the commander of COPCON, came to favour more and more the CRTSMs proposal. He said on a radio interview

"I see no danger at all in these congresses or councils. I consider them, like neighbourhood committees, to be the essence of the Portuguese Revolution. I consider them similar to the Russian Soviets of 1917. . . the anarcho-syndicalists are very humorous when they write slogans on the walls such as 'A Portuguesa so temos cozido.' (*The only Portuguese thing we have is 'cozido' - cozido being a popular dish of boiled potatoes, vegetable, pork, beef and sausage meat*). Its true enough. We must construct our own socialism. I give my whole-hearted support to these revolutionary councils." (41)

Manuel Crespo explains why Otelo (and COPCON) came down on the side of the CRTSMs

"We have the backing from COPCON and General Otelo because it has been his men who have protected the workers in recent months during the take-overs of factories and farms and the occupations of houses and buildings. Otelo defends the idea of a people's army so that he has the workers at his side in the defence of the workers' interests and the furtherance of the revolutionary process. COPCON understands the workers' problems and knows that the political parties do not serve the interests because of the inter-party strife." (42)

Otelo needed a base, an army in addition to the army. The CRTSMs although barely in existence, were all that he could have. Base



organisations such as the residents' commissions were not nationally organised. They did not call conferences or demonstrations, and were not at the end of a telephone.

In return for Otelo's support the PRP stepped aside from formal sponsorship. The CRTSMs found it very useful to have Otelo and sections of COPCON on its side. Whilst proclaiming to be an organisation of workers' councils its power base, such as it was, was the military. The July 1975 issue of *Our Common Struggle* said that 40 barracks declared their support for the CRTSM's proposal and had elected committees. The same occurred in factories in Marinha Grande and Setenave.

The reporting of the support may have been over-generous but the Otelo/CRTSMs axis was generating discussion in the barracks and anxiety in higher quarters.

## 8 Organising in the Workplaces

Before it had the active support of COPCON the CRTSMs had not been able to create elected CRTs (Revolutionary Workers' Councils) in the workplaces. The support of elements from COPCON encouraged a renewed assault. In the days that followed the debates about forms of democracy inside the MFA there was an increase in workplace and barracks discussions.

Christopher Reed, a reporter for the *Guardian*, had been covering the

CRTSMs and its intertwining with COPCON. On June 19th he wrote

"Now the PRP claims to have embryo or fully fledged councils in 250 companies, supported from all 50 units in COPCON including commanders . . .

Earlier this week Crespo's supporters at Lisnave won a majority vote in the assembly representing 12,000 (?) Lisnave and allied workers which will launch a 'non-party revolutionary council' with support, he claims, from local COPCON men.'

The two most prominent members of the PRP, Isabel do Carmo and Carlos Antunes, claim that revolutionary committees were established in all the major factories. 'All the most advanced factories had CRTs; Lisnave, Setenave, Siderurgia, Cometna, Sorefame, etc, etc.' (43) These estimates are generous in the extreme. (44)

In spite of the CRTSMs distancing itself from the PRP there is little evidence of workers' commissions or workers' assemblies independently adopting proposals for revolutionary councils. Only in Lisnave and Setenave was the project approved by general assemblies of workers. Admittedly these were the two most important bastions of revolutionary workers in Portugal. In both the PRP had active cells of at least 25 members. In both the assemblies were addressed by a member of the MFA as well as by a CRTSMs speaker. (45) But in other perhaps less 'revolutionary' factories the proposals were not adopted.

At the airport an assembly of the workers turned the project down. There were discussions at IBM, at Sorefame (an enormous engineering complex), Massa and the Che Guevara commune (a commune based in a former luxury hotel). In a few places provisional committees were formed but as they were not properly elected they were not very different in form from the

self appointed CDRs. At the Siderurgia steel works the Revolutionary Council project was amalgamated with the Councils for the Defence of the Revolution. However the amalgamation did not smooth over the antagonism between the PCP and the PRP. Carlos Nunes remembers

"There was a deep division. Carlos Antunes was involved in physical confrontation in Siderurgia. . . The discussion at Siderurgia was around support for the demonstration of June 17th." (46)

## 9 June 17th - Waiting for Otelo

The CRTSMs called a demonstration for June 17th, which became a focal point for their activity in the workplaces and barracks. This demonstration was politically one of the most radical since April 25th because it challenged all the political parties and their associated institution, the Constituent Assembly. The CRTSM's issued a communique which said:

"From Tras-os-Montes to the Azores reaction is attacking in force. The Constituent Assembly is a circus. The parties of the coalition, which are specialists in dividing and demobilizing the workingclass, have lost all initiative and shown clearly that they have nothing to do with the interests of the workers."

Also it was a workers' demonstration. Slogans in support of the MFA were conspicuously absent. *Jornal Novo* (17/6/75) reported that the main slogans were "For a revolutionary non-party government" and "For a Socialist Revolution." On the day a third slogan was added: "Immediate dissolution of the Constituent Assembly!" (47)

The demonstration itself was preceded by a street wide banner, proclaiming the most popular slogan "*Fora com a canalha: o poder a quem Trabalha!*" (Out with the scum: Power to those who work). Others were "We are the first soviet of revolutionary Portugal!" and "a revolutionary government without political parties".

The demonstration was intrinsically linked to the defence of *Radio Renascenca* and *Republica*, both under workers' control, both under attack from the right.

For several days *Radio Renascenca* prepared for the demonstration and regularly devoted time to a phone in. Some of the workers interviewed clearly recall it as the *Renascenca* demonstration and not that of the CRTSMs. (Incidentally several did not remember it at all.)

The PRP/BR was the only one of the political groups to work for the demonstration. MES stayed on the side lines but issued a communique.

On 17th of June the PCP issued a statement implicitly attacking the Revolutionary Councils and the section of the MFA encouraging them:

"The pressures and intrigues aimed at provoking conflicts and divisions within the MFA must be condemned, whether they come from the reactionary right, reformist opportunists, or ultra-leftist pseudo-revolutionaries. If some parties do not measure up to the revolutionary standards, that does not mean that all should come under the same cloud.

It is essential to distinguish between the parties that are with the revolutionary process from those that are against it. Failing to distinguish the former from the latter would be particularly dangerous.

It is also necessary to be alert to the propaganda of small

parties or groups without mass support, which, under the pretext of struggling against 'partisan disputes,' are trying to gain partisan positions of the most typically sectarian type.

On this question, the PCP stresses that building democracy and socialism in Portugal will not be possible without the PCP and still less against it." (48)

The organisers estimated that forty thousand workers, soldiers and sailors took to the streets. This was certainly a gross exaggeration. Nevertheless the demonstration was sizeable, the largest in June and until the one in support of Popular Power on 16th of July (a long period in those times).

More important than numbers was the atmosphere and the aspirations. 'Carlos' was involved with its organisation. He vividly describes the dependence of militants upon Otelo:

"When I got to the Marques Pombal, that is where the demonstration was to gather, nobody there was certain whether the Lisnave workers would actually turn up. And then they did come up the street. It was quite a sight, the sun glinting on their helmets, they were like an army, marching in groups of seven, very tightly organised.

They had been in a sense conned because - and this I got from a PRP militant who worked at Lisnave later on - they had been promised that Otelo would be at the demonstration and Otelo did not turn up. They were crying out for him, crying out for him. . . (49)

When negotiations took place it was always the demonstrators that suffered the most. Time was passing by and things were not moving and people did not know what was going on and there were rumours 'he is coming', 'he is coming', 'he is in jail', rumours of this and that. In the end we found out that Otelo was just at a mighty nice dinner somewhere with a Bulgarian military attache or somebody like that.

The Lisnave workers went there partly because of that (*promise of Otelo being there*). . .

The collapse of the demonstration at the end could have been prevented by us or by any of the other speakers if someone had

said the demonstration had not been convened in order to have Otelo here. Carlos Antunes (of the PRP) bet, as he was always doing, on precipitating events.

The whole weight of Lisnave had committed itself at that meeting. I don't know how well the mobilisation would have gone if they had not expected to see Otelo there. Maybe a large number of militants would have gone anyway. You know how these things are.

It wouldn't have been right for Otelo to turn up there and listen to demands such as the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. After all this was at San Bento, outside the assembly. This would have been tantamount to a coup d'etat. Can you imagine if the chief of staff of COPCON had turned up at that demonstration? So he just sent the military Governor of Lisbon, a minor figure, who made a small speech greeting the workers in Otelo's name." (50)

Comrade Palacio, of Lisnave and the UDP, called the June 17th demonstration "the demo of *Radio Renascenca*":

"The PRP wanted to take advantage of the Renascenca Demonstration; to promote their own ideas. The other people put forward a more unitarian stance; starting from the view that there were many people with differing ideas and you could not foist one conception." (51)

Up to the time this had been the most radical demonstration seen in Lisbon. It was barely reported in some of the more "progressive" papers. *Diario de Noticias* and *Seculo* gave less than a column on the inside pages. It is possible that the call for the dismissal of the Constituent Assembly was seen as empty rhetoric. Lenin in April 1917 had insisted that the slogan calling for the downfall of the Provisional Government should not be raised if there was the danger that the workers would not understand that it could not be achieved immediately. The Central Committee of the Bolsheviks agreed on April 22nd, 1917:

"The slogan 'Down with the Provisional Government' is an incorrect one at the present moment because, in the absence of a solid majority of the people on the side of the revolutionary proletariat. Such a slogan is either an empty phrase or objectively amounts to attempts at adventurism." (52)

The Lisbon correspondent of the *Economist* (21/6/75) saw the Revolutionary Councils essentially as a front for General de Carvalho.

"The struggle within the Armed Forces Movement over the role of politicians in Portugal reached a new crisis point this week as General Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho and Copcon, the military security force he commands, tried to make an end to the constituent assembly. COPCON itself could hardly march through the streets shouting anti-party slogans. But its brains trust, the Revolutionary Proletarian party, did just that."

It is impossible to assess the demonstration in isolation from the manoeuvres of the COPCON faction within the MFA. COPCON too, while stating its sympathy for popular rank and file organisations, was forced to criticise 'the untimely attempts to form revolutionary councils'. The implication that revolutionary councils were only a matter of time did not go down too well in the MFA.

#### 10 The reaction of the PCP

The PCP was worried. It feared that the MFA's setting up a mass 'anti-party' apparatus subordinate to itself would be a way of bypassing the PCP. Four thousand workers, about half the work force at Lisnave, had voted to support the action "for a non-party revolutionary government and socialist revolution." *Le Monde's* correspondent Dominique Pouchin wrote that these workers voted

"for communism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and for the creation of a revolutionary council." (53)

The PCP feared the movement was aggressively political. On the other hand advocates of the Revolutionary Councils argued

"The social reformers and social democrats cannot resolve the

current impasse, so if the workers do not eventually achieve a radical solution we shall have to use arms. We believe we have the support of Otelo." (54)

This teaming up of COPCON and the CRTSMs made the PCP anxious. Senior officials were forced to participate in discussions with the secretary of the CRTSMs, Crespo. The PCP and PRP also had joint discussions.

Later Crespo said

"We have grassroots support from the PCP but not from its top because it realises we are a threat to its own organisation in trade unions and local government. That is why I was unable to win formal support from its leaders." (55)

An interview explaining the PCP's attitude to the CRTSMs was published in *Vida Mundial* on the 10/7/75. Octavio Pato spoke on behalf of the PCP. He himself joined the PCP at the age of 16 and had been a member of the Central Committee of the Party since 1950. He was leader of the PCP parliamentary group in the first Constituent Assembly and their candidate in the 1976 Presidential election.

"The PCP was invited to participate in the activities of the CRTSMs but 'our response was negative, i.e., we neither participate in nor support the efforts of people who have sought to create the CRTSMs. We think that the formation of such commissions objectively represents a form of division, not merely within the mass popular movement but within the MFA itself.. The PCP considers them the work of divisionists with 'little representativity'."

When we look at the attitude of the CRTSMs towards the CTs we see that it was not too difficult for the PCP to pin the label 'divisive' upon the CRTSMs.



## 11 CRTs Versus CTs

Octavio Pato specifically contrasted the attempt to set up CRTs in the workplaces with existing CTs:

"The PCP distinguishes between these 'commissions' and the hundreds of workers' and residents' commissions all over the country whose concrete objective is to defend the revolution and direct the revolutionary process along the socialist path." (56)

It is my intention in this section to see whether there was an antagonism between the CTs and CRTs, and to try to understand its basis and possible consequences.

In the first six months of June there had been steady consolidation by the PCP in the workplaces. Not only had the Intersindical been sorted out but in many workplaces some sort of working relationship between the unions and the CTs had been established. The PCP by now had a clear orientation upon the CTs which made it easier for CT activists to co-operate with the PCP. In a number of CTs the PCP had a majority and in others it was the largest of the parties to be represented. It would be wrong to suggest that because the PCP had majority membership that a CT would automatically follow the PCP line. PCP militants were in general to the left of the PCP and would on occasion support non-PCP initiatives, even if they originated from the extreme left. There was in particular a degree of sympathy for Otelo and COPCON and, to a much lesser extent, for the PRP. (57)

Nevertheless the PCP was extremely wary, to say the least, of the PRP

and the CRTSMs. At times this developed into open hostility. On one occasion Carlos Antunes was due to address an assembly of workers on the CRTSMs and had to take refuge in the toilets. (58)

In the past many PCP worker militants may well have sided with workers' struggles and organisations such as their CTs against their own party. This could have led to their being both resilient and independent. This same resilience could act against anybody who set out to undermine the basic unit of organisation in the workplaces, the workers' commissions. These were already a unifying force in the workplaces and in the big factories they were generally the most authoritative organisation. They developed spontaneously, in spite of the employers and the PCP.

It was of course necessary for revolutionaries to fight within them against sluggish or right-wing leadership. But it was these same workers' committees that had led the cleansing of fascists from the firms and had physical confrontations with the army. The CRTSMs argued that the CTs in the factories were unsuitable units of organisation, unable to prepare for armed struggle. Hence the CRTSMs challenged the over-all authority of the CTs. It proposed that the activities of the workers' committees be restricted to economic functions under the watchful eyes of the CRTs:

"The workers' committees (CTs) are nothing more than autonomous trade union organisations that exist because the trade unions don't. The CRTSMs differ from them fundamentally in their aims. The committees were created to fight for wage demands as a class necessity. The Councils (CRTs) go beyond this stage since the task they address themselves to at this time is the seizure of power. In this way the Councils have a political role that the workers' committees do not have." (*Republica* 23/7/75)

The Revolutionary Workers' Councils (CRTs) were to be the political overlords:

"The Revolutionary Councils are workers' assemblies which are trying to make a quantitative leap in the organisation of Workers' Councils because their objective is the taking of power and exercising that power in the future.

They aim to take responsibility for control of production, the management and administration of enterprises, but not actually running the factories, because for this purpose there are managers who should be subordinate to the workers' power as expressed by the Council." (*Repubblica* 23/7/75)

Those wishing to make a revolution emphasise the battle for productivity and production should be subordinate to the more political issues of the day. Significantly the argument was not for workers' control of the factory, not for self-management, but workers' control of the managers. But by classing the workers' committees as economic and subordinating them to the political interests they were going against the ideas of those militants who had fought to establish and defend CTs. Clear distinctions and divisions could not be reproduced inside the factories. Whether the individual CTs defined their struggles as political is not the point; many workers' commissions had organised demonstrations, occupations, strikes and actions which were political in consequence. Strikes by large numbers of workers forced the State to turn against them. Individuals who were concerned with day to day issues and with political concerns did not erect a "wall of China" to separate the two spheres.

The divide between economics and politics resulted in the CRTSMs never taking up bread and butter issues in the workplaces. The leaflets which were issued were mainly about the CRTSM's proposal itself. There were

also some that raised a 'more political issue' - what to do with the former secret police (PIDE).

Militants in the CTs were alienated from the CRTSMs and its attempt to act as 'political overlord to the mass organisations of the class' and this helps explain why, although supported by COPCON, the CRTSMs did not really take root in the factories.

## 12 An Assessment

Twenty four hours after the demonstration of June 17th the Revolutionary Council of the MFA issued the statement that the 'MFA rejects the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by its armed militia since it does not fit into its pluralistic concept, already defined, of the Portuguese revolution'.

The June 17 demonstration, COPCON support of the working class, the *Republica* affair and the growing confidence of the Socialist Party precipitated yet another crisis within the Revolutionary Council and the MFA in general.

Within days the left within the MFA came up with another scheme, the Povo/MFA pact, which managed to unify momentarily the PCP, the Fifth Division officers around MES, COPCON and the supporters of the CRTSMs. The details of the pact are discussed in the next chapter so they will

not be discussed now. Suffice it to say that the Povo/MFA pact in effect caused the death of the CRTSMs. It took up all the main ideas, indeed most of the Pact was directly lifted from the CRTSM's documents, as the PRP was proud to claim. (59)

The CRTSMs did not die at once, nor were they dissolved. In July and August a second, postponed, conference was held. This extended into two weekends and was much filmed by TV cameras and observed by foreign tourist revolutionaries. It was much less representative than the one before. A writer in *Solidarity* reported

"The whole episode left an unpleasant flavour of manipulation. I doubt we will hear much more of the CRTSMs. When the next upsurge develops it will find different forms and a different context." (60)

Even as late as 20 November there was a reference to the CRTSMs at a meeting in the Rocha section of Lisnave:

"I remember an assembly in Rocha where the CRTSMs were discussed. It was a general assembly of most of the day shift and some of the night. About 750/800 of the 1500 workers were there. The armed forces were involved. The officer who was called by the workers was actually a worker from Lisnave who was at that time serving in the army. He was also a member of the PCP.

I made the proposal for the CRTs and for arming the class. We never arrived at a vote. A big argument broke out. Only the PRP defended the proposal. The PCP and UDP were against." (61)

The CRTSMs were not to lead to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. The scheme was superficial. If a political organisation does try to launch something from above great care has to be taken with regard to connections. The ultra-left divorce between politics and economics, the initial contraposing of the CRTSMs to the elections and proposed subordination of the workers' commissions did not help the scheme to put

down deep organisational roots in the workplaces. As one of the former members of the provisional secretariat said to me in 1976:

"They did not have an answer, a political alternative. They had an alternative idea - a kind of bluff, something the PRP is rather good at."

Other activists agree:

"Fundamentally the CRTSMs were an idea from the head of Carlos Antunes. He transposed the experience of the Soviets to the time. Very Artificial.

They were disconnected from the workers' struggle. Looking back I think that MES was quite right in its criticisms. It wasn't an organisation springing from the rank and file. It was an organisation imposed from the top, an attempt to impose something, which did not work at all." (62)

This is how the soldier from Caldas da Rainha, whose

"first impression was that the CRTSMS were a strong good organisation which joined differing forces"

later reflected. . .

"But now I think that operation was only a display because in the real way there were no connections. . . what the PRP used to do was have nothing then two days later all the nation knew. In this case, the CRTSMS, existed." (62)

Nevertheless the CRTSMs achieved the following:

- i) They were responsible for being the first section of the left to significantly advocate the idea of a national network of SOVIETS.
- ii) The founding conference was a political meeting that officers attended in uniform.
- iii) The workplace and barracks meetings were the first to include both workers and soldiers.
- iv) They organised a workers' demonstration which called for the replacement of the Constituent Assembly.
- v) They raised and had an effect on the debate about Workers' councils in the MFA assembly

- vi) They were indirectly responsible for most of the wording of the Povo/MFA pact.
- vii) They advocated the arming of the working class.

In isolation from other events and viewed from a non revolutionary context the above list appears impressive. Given the atmosphere and possibilities of the time it seems probable that most of the CRTSMs achievements were inevitable. If one asked what day-to-day actions resulted in the factories and towns as a result of them then the answer must be very little indeed. One can find more evidence of impact in the armed forces; such as in the number of meetings and the disciplining of officers. Advocates of the CRTSMs would argue that they deliberately did not condescend to take up mundane matters and that attempts to judge by such criteria are therefore inappropriate. According to them the CRTSMs were primarily concerned with the discussion of political ideas such as the need for armed militias and the seizure of power. It is very hard to estimate the impact of these ideas at the level of the base organisations but evidence suggests that the CRTSMs helped ensure that such topics were part of the discussions of the day.

It is obvious that the CRTSMs never took off. But for the purposes of this thesis the CRTSMs were significant in another way. Despite the PRP's attempt to minimise their role, they developed from a political party - from above, and to some extent, outside the workers' movement. It might be argued that their influence was negative but they had some influence. Their failure does not prove that trying to build 'from outside' does not work. In other situations and circumstances political

organisations have initiated mass non-party political movements. Of course these movements can not be built by political organisations in isolation. The problem was not that they were 'from outside' but that the PRP/BR project did not have its feet on the ground. The strategy for activity and organisation in the workplaces was inevitably going to exclude and antagonize revolutionaries. Ultimately, while the need to arm the working class was debated, the organisations at the base were not prepared to adapt their structures and activities to the requirements of the CRTSMs.



### 13 CRTSMs - References

- 1 Interview with Jose Sousa, 29/4/84 \*
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Refer, for example, to *O 18 de Janeiro de 1934* - introduced and edited by Manta.
- 5 Interview with Afonso da Sousa, 31/8/80. \*
- 6 Most of the *Republica* interview on the 23rd of July was printed in *Radical America*, November-December 1975, Volume 9, Number 6. I have used this translation, with a few minor amendments.
- 7 *Conselhos Revolucionarios; Projecto Povo/MFA*, published by Edicoes Revolucao, page 4.
- 8 *Revolucao*, number 35; page 3.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Refer, for example, to *Insight on Portugal - The Year of the Captains*, by the Insight Team of The Sunday Times, page 238.
- 11 Translation by Mailer, *Portugal: The Impossible Revolution?*.
- 12 Interview with Jorge, 13/8/80. \*
- 13 Russia in 1917 would seem to be more appropriate than 1918.
- 14 Refer to *Conselhos Revolucionarios; Projecto Povo/MFA* for the full list.
- 15 Interview with Jose Sousa and Afonso da Sousa, 29/4/84 \*
- 16 Interview with Luis Lopes, August 1980. \*
- 17 Interview with Eugania, February 1976. \*
- 18 Refer to Cliff, *Portugal at the Crossroads*, page 30.
- 19 Mailer, *op cit*, pages 252/3.
- 20 Interview with Carlos Nunes, 4/6/84. \*
- 21 Interview with Jorge, 2/8/80. \*
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 *The Guardian*, 21/4/75.
- 24 Mailer, *op cit*, page 254.
- 25 Isabel de Carmo & Carlos Antunes, interviewed by John Woollacott and Bill Lomax (in Custodias prison) on 2/9/80.
- 26 *Conselhos Revolucionarios; Projecto Povo/MFA*, published by Edicoes Revolucao.
- 27 Interview with two officers from the Fifth division, Mauricio Levy and Jorge Abegao, 5/5/84. \*
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 The proposal was presented by Carlos Antunes and Joao Oliveira from the MFA was there. Interview with Carlos Nunes, 4/6/84. \*
- 30 While attacking the other substitutionists and stressing the self-activity of the class the PRP were in themselves substitutionist but in a different manner. The PRP played down its own role and couched its own actions in terms of the class. Hence the tendency to say the CRTSMs were launched by the class. Other dramatic instances of this acting on behalf of the class include the armed actions prior to April 25, attempting to prepare an

insurrection in the Autumn of 1975 and robbing banks to pay for various activities. It must also, for the record, be stated that the PRP did not organise an insurrection and that a number of the comrades convicted of participating in bank robberies were innocent.

- 31 Interview with Artur Palacio, 2/8/82. \*
- 32 Interview with Carlos Nunes, 4/6/84. \*
- 33 Porch, *The Portuguese Armed Forces and The Revolution*, pages 193/4 cites Fremontier, *Portugal, Les Points sur les i*, Paris, 1976.
- 34 Interview with Mauricio Levy and Jorge Abegao, 5/5/84. \*
- 35 This was the view of the CRTSMs. According to J Steele, who wrote a major report in the *Guardian*, (2/8/1983) on the CDRs and the experience in Cuba, that by the early 1980's the Cuban Government was acknowledging that their CDRs only transmitted from the top to bottom; they did not reflect people desires.
- 36 Interview with Mauricio Levy and Jorge Abegao, 5/5/84. \*
- 37 Porch, *The Portuguese Armed Forces and The Revolution*, page 137 cites Soares, *Portugal:Quelle Revolution?*, Paris 1976 page 125.
- 38 Source.A *Revolucao num Regimento*, page 44
- 39 The Gabinete de Dinamisation do Exerceto, which helped organise this CRTSMs meeting, was the army fifth division unit (not the combined forces Fifth Division). Note that GDACI, from the army, helping organise an air base meeting.
- 40 *Expresso*, 13/6/75.
- 41 RTP interview quoted by Mailer, *op cit*, page 254.
- 42 *Expresso*, 6/6/75.
- 43 Interview by Woollacott and Lomax, 2/9/80.
- 44 During the summer of 1975 IS comrades visited many workplaces in the Lisbon Industrial belt. What struck us was the lack of PRP influence in these workplaces. In the following months I personally visited many workplaces in a variety of capacities. My own estimate is that, at most, the PRP could organise say, a discussion group and issue a leaflet, in one hundred factories.
- 45 Sobral Costa according to *Conselhos Revolucionarios; Projecto Povo/MFA*.
- 46 Interview with Carlos Nunes, 4/6/84. \*
- 47 Dominique Pouchin reported in the *Le Monde* 19/6/75: Source *Intercontinental Press*, page 902, 30/6/75.
- 48 *Intercontinental Press*, page 902, 30/6/75.
- 49 Although non-appearance was a regular feature of those times in this case there was pressure put on Otelo to distance COPCON and himself from a so-called Party operation. COPCON felt the need to do this by means of a communique, the details of which can be found in *Expresso* 21/6/75, page 12.
- 50 Interview with Afonso da Sousa, 31/8/80. \*
- 51 Interview with Artur Palacio, 2/8/82. \*
- 52 Quoted in Cliff, *Lenin*, vol 2, page 174.
- 53 *Intercontinental Press*, page 902, 30/6/75.
- 54 *Ibid*.
- 55 *Expresso*, 6/6/75.
- 56 *Vida Mundial*, 10/7/75.
- 57 These observations are derived from my own experiences. This independance and sympathy was still very evident in the

Presidential elections of 1976. Many so-called PCP CTs actively campaigned for Otelo instead of the PCP candidate, Octavio Pato. Otelo obtained 16% whereas the PCP candidate got 8% of the vote. For further details refer to Peterson, *The Significance of the Election*; International Socialism Journal, July 1976.

58 This story was told to me a number of times but I was never able to get the exact details.

59 Porch, *Op cit*, page 193.

60 *Solidarity*, vol 8, no 3, page 21. See also, for example Mailer, *op cit*, page 254.

61 Interview with Carlos Nunes, 4/6/84. \*

62 Interview with Afonso da Sousa, 31/8/80. \*

63 Interview with Jorge, 13/8/80. \*

## POPULAR ASSEMBLIES

- 1 Before the pact; Pontinha, etc
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## 1 Before the Pact

The political process, and in particular the 'cultural dynamisation' programme of the MFA co-ordinated by the Fifth Division, meant that in the first half of 1975 there had been hundreds and hundreds of meetings of peasants and/or residents and/or workers with representatives from the armed forces. The MFA did not want to hand power over to the traditional forces or to political parties. Nor did it particularly relish the idea of entirely carrying the burden of power itself. One of the functions of these meetings was to win popular support and recognition by the masses. But this was more than propping up any 'temporary' status quo. 'Cultural dynamisation' attempted to mould new power structures.

Popular assemblies emerged, in concept at least, as the highest political expression of popular power. The idea, not dissimilar to that of Soviets, was simple. The country was to be run by the people, through their popular assemblies consisting of delegates from workplaces, residents' committees and barracks. The delegates were to be elected at mass meetings.

The first of these popular assemblies was at Pontinha, on the northern outskirts of Lisbon. Pontinha was the model that was cited in the debates within the MFA and was held up as a living example of an

alternative form of power. Because of this support Pontinha became well known.

The nerve centre of the assembly was the Pontinha barracks, home to the number one regiment of engineers. These barracks had been the command headquarters for the 25 April coup. The regiment's reputation differed from that of RALIS and some of the others in Lisbon in that it did not have a high political profile outside the zone. At Pontinha officers sympathetic to MES, and attached to the Fifth Division, played a crucial part. I met one of them called Abegao in 1975, and again in 1984. (1) He told me:

"The regiment at Pontinha had officers who were well known and had an important political intervention but not in representing the barracks." (2)

Paul Sweezey visited the barracks in June 1975. He reported

"it was an outstanding rather than a typical unit. About 700 soldiers live in or are attached to the barracks. Most of the noncoms and privates are mechanically trained, and workers by background. The officers for the most part are graduates in engineering from civilian schools, politically aware and open to ideas. After the end of the fighting in Africa a great deal of equipment was sent back to Portugal, and much of the necessary repair work was done in the Regiment's shops. . . . on September 28th the soldiers went out on the barricades with the workers. The defeat of the attempted coup opened the way for political and cultural activity by the soldiers." (3)

On December 10th 1974 a mass meeting in the barracks established a new organisation called an *assembleia da unidade* - ADU. This ADU became a model for other units. It was an elected consultative, educational and information committee, which the command of the regiment was expected to refer to, and which sent delegates to higher military bodies. The basis of representation was two each from the professional officer and the reserve officer corps, eight sergeants (half of whom were from the

professional corps) and twelve soldiers, three from each company.

Although the ADU was weighted in favour of the hierarchy the idea of elected representatives shook the traditionalists. (4)

The soldiers and officers formed direct links with the local population: building roads, bridges and repairing houses with military equipment refurbished by their mechanics. The regiment was interested in making links with all the workers' committees and CMs to form a more concrete link which was not tied to a direct political superstructure. After March 11th meetings between workers and soldiers became far more organised. MES was keen to be able to match the CRTSM's scheme with what appeared to be a practical example of a workers' council, one built not by a political party, but by an amalgam of grass roots forces with left activists in the military. Abegao outlined the reasons for the assembly:

"Hitherto all the work had been done with the CTs and CMs on a one to one basis. The general idea of creating the Popular Assembly was to create an institution, if you can call it so, which could co-ordinate and direct the priorities. This was seen as being better than having discussions on a one to one basis, for example between the barracks and and a CM. The idea was to further the process and to gather all the interested parts of the zone, all the CTs, all the CMs and define those priorities with all the people interested.

The dynamics of the process was profound. The whole process of creating the Popular Assembly was based on cultural work in which everyone took part and everyone was involved. In other regiments, other assemblies, the political dominance of (sections of the) left and the struggles were directed towards political lines of the parties. The work was specific because it was an engineering regiment. The idea of this project was based, but not mechanically, upon China. China with Gramsci." (5)

Following several months of planning the first assembly was held on June 29th. It took place in the indoor sports hall belonging to the regiment. The hall was packed. Some 17 factories and 30 local residents'

organisations were represented. Conscious of their role only two formal representatives of the military, elected at mass meetings of the barracks, were permitted. Also few soldiers were directly involved in the assembly as most went back to their homes at the weekend.

This first meeting, and the next few, were substantially reported in the established as well as the far left press. (6) Voting was to be 'by arm in the air' so that all could see how the various bodies felt. The assembly defined its main tasks as the organisation of defence in the event of an offensive from the right, and the strengthening of links between the soldiers and workers. By July 8th, the date that the Povo/MFA pact was signed, Pontinha had held two meetings. *Republica*, now published under workers' control, reporting on the third meeting held on July 13th, optimistically claimed

"it is this organisation which will allow the unity of all those forces who are struggling against the dictatorship of Capital. This, and only this, sort of organisation is profoundly democratic and truly represents the workers. It guarantees that the exploited masses can themselves take matters into their own hands, leading them forward in the struggle for their liberation, and ensuring that this leads to socialism (the only free society, for it is run in all its aspects by the workers), and not to new forms of capitalism and oppression." (7)

The assembly met weekly and at its peak 200 delegates from the constituent organisations attended. Some of the meetings were held on a sports field. For a time it operated with a large amount of local support. One worker from TAP recalls how his Volkswagen was stuffed with people, and he had to make several journeys ferrying people to the assemblies. (8)



Perhaps sparked by the Pontinha preparations, residents further to the west in Lisbon, in Olivais, organised a Popular Assembly which met on the 22nd of June. (The MFA newspaper *Movimento* gives the date as 15 days before the signing of the Povo/MFA Pact but not the actual date.) The first of the new issues of *Republica* carried a detailed interview with the committee which co-ordinated the residents' commissions.

"Olivais has a population of more than 70,000 residents coming from all the different social classes but the great majority are workers in the industrial belt. It includes more than 100 workplaces (T.A.P., Petroquimica, Sacor, Textiles, engineering, Automatica, etc) and also RALIS. So, as you can see, the assembly is in a strategically crucial military/political position.

The assembly which met on the 22nd was a prototype of a future popular assembly the aim of which was to co-ordinate and centralise the struggle of workers and residents in the area." (9)

Representatives from RALIS and the workers' commissions were present.

The meeting decided to take over an abandoned and only partly built nursery school and ask construction workers to complete the building.

The article in the MFA paper stresses that this initiative came from the people, not from the army. However RALIS was commonly recognised as a 'star' unit, *uma unidade militar vedada*. (10)

Prior to the Povo/MFA pact, in Setubal there was also an attempt to establish an assembly. These preparations were very different from those at Pontinha. Setubal had a strong militant working class and a very developed residents' movement. It was probably the largest base of the revolutionary left in Portugal. The parties to the left of the Socialist Party generally supported some kind of entity which would link different popular organisations. By contrast with Pontinha the local barracks did

not dominate the proceedings.

In Setubal on the 4th of July, four days before the Povo/MFA pact, the PCP called a meeting which was attended by four far left groups (the MDP/CDE, the FSP, MES and the LCI). The PRP did not take part - presumably because it was committed to the CRTSMs. The idea was to launch a programme common to the groups, and specifically to

"push forward the creation of Popular Assemblies of the unitary organs, assemblies that should hold real power within the area." (11)

To some extent the PCP had been forced to organise because of the strength of the far left within Setubal. It was anxious to lessen the influence of the city residents' organisation (the Conselho de Moradores) which was under the influence of the far left. The PCP viewed the popular assembly much as it viewed the CDR's, as necessary to defend the revolution being made by the State.

Back in Lisbon, on Sunday July 6th, a well prepared meeting of 'the popular organisation of the Council of Loures' was taking place. The MFA sent a speaker. It was claimed that this first meeting had been preceded by 50 discussions in CTs, CMs, Co-operatives, small business and industrial associations. They had supported the idea of an organisation which could take up political, social and economic problems in the area of the Municipal Council (Camara Municipal). Loures is to the north of RALIS and to the immediate east of Pontinha and residents from Pontinha participated. The initiators were the Camara Municipal and the Junta Freguesias (zones, or parishes within the Camara Municipal). The meeting lasted all day and there were nine plenary groups. The summary of the

proceedings was to be published as a 61 page booklet. (12) It is only in the last few pages referring to the final session that it emerges that this organisation saw itself, indeed, as a 'popular assembly'. The influence of the PCP is evident. The meeting and structure had been organised as to rival the Pontinha assembly and the term 'assembly' had been tacked on to keep pace with recent external developments. After all the debate concerning the Povo/MFA pact had reached its zenith.

## 2 The Povo/MFA pact

By the end of June the political crisis was deepening. Demonstrations and actions such as the CRTSM's on 17th of June had to be assessed by the hyper-sensitive MFA. COPCON was embarrassed and tried to distance itself from the CRTSMs. Although it was felt to be of paramount importance that the unity of the officer corps be preserved, indeed Otelo often said that 'our biggest mistake was to allow the MFA to become divided', there was still considerable jockeying for positions and attempts to manufacture new proposals.

Although neither the CRTSMs' nor the CDRs' proposals had been formally adopted, the predominance of such discussions, together with the shifts to support the workers at *Republica*, meant that moderates such as those around Melo Antunes felt the need to steer the MFA along a more 'sensible' course. This emerged as 'the Plan of Political Action' - PAP - and was approved by the Revolutionary Council on June 19th. Its success depended upon its being able to appeal to the various factions.

It included Rosa Coutinho, who said 'I considered it at the time to be the last chance of the revolution'. He played a leading role in drawing up the plans. (13)

In itself the PAP wasn't important. It was not supported by any popular demonstrations. All parties appeared suspicious of the compromise. But PAP showed that the various individuals and sections of the MFA were still aligning themselves and that the boundaries were not set. Vitor Alves, a founder member of the MFA and a key figure in the coup of April 25th, said that "The PAP was a big compromise, just like the Constitution". (14) PAP also showed that the moderate faction was coalescing and emerging as a force. The PCP was alarmed by this (it considered Rosa Coutinho as being close to them). Hence PAP resulted in the PCP supporters, the 'Goncalvists', feeling the need to ally with the COPCON faction.

The officer prominent in the Pontinha Popular assembly who has already been quoted spoke of the need to sort things out at National level:

"things reached the point where there was a very close link between what was happening outside and inside the barracks. The pressure inside the barracks by all the CMs and CTs led to a constant contact between the barracks and civilians. The ties were already close. By that time it was felt that you either organise and institutionalise them or you reach a very chaotic state.

There were two clear roads, the social democratic road and the revolutionary. In fact there was a close parallel between what was happening outside and inside the barracks." (15)

On July 8th the General Assembly of the MFA narrowly approved the 'guidelines for the alliance between the people and the MFA', otherwise

known as the Povo/MFA pact. It appeared at the time to unite the beleaguered MFA.

But others commented

"Even for seasoned observers of the Portuguese revolution, long accustomed to surprises, the approval of the *Guide Document* came as a surprise. Not only did the document sign the death warrant of the PAP, announced barely three weeks before, throwing the revolution off balance yet again, but the guide document was itself a baffling hybrid of Goncalvist and COPCON philosophy." (16)

The release of the DOC-GUIA marked a decisive shift to the left by the MFA. (Interestingly the DOC-GUIA was not associated with Otelo). The MFA commitment to direct democracy was of tremendous importance. It was as if everybody had been waiting for the MFA to legislate for socialism from above before it could really be implemented.

The Goncalvists, COPCON and the Fifth Division all appeared to support the call for a decentralised state 'permitting local initiative under the control, surveillance and the progressive actions of popular committees' aimed at destroying the machinery of the 'bourgeois' centralised state.

The object was to set up a parallel authority to the State and parliamentary system. The organisations of *poder popular* - the residents' commissions, the soldiers' committees (ADU's), workers' commissions and other local organisations would combine locally, as popular assemblies. The whole structure would form into a pyramid, under the protection of the MFA. The local committees, including the Popular Assemblies, would be responsible for 'social actions in the domains of

health, housing, defence, etc.' Elected delegates were to be accountable to and instantly recallable by their constituents.

What was unusual was not so much the call for popular democracy but that it managed to win the backing of the PCP, the same PCP which had been attacking 'adventurism' and 'anarchy'. Martin Kayman suggests, in *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Portugal*, that the PCP

"had also come to see that direct action was an unavoidable part of the revolution. Although the Communists criticised the MFA proposal (accusing it of *dirigism*), they were themselves adopting a similar line: the only difference was that the PCP, regarding itself as the historical party of the working class, proposed itself as the agent through which popular power should be articulated with the state." (17)

The most controversial aspect, which Prime Minister Vasco Goncalves tried to play down, was the linking of the assemblies to a National Popular Assembly. Nevertheless Goncalves was bitterly attacked by Vasco Lourenco, on behalf of the moderates, who accused him of having lied when he supported the PAP, since he was now supporting a document which contradicted PAP.

According to Kayman, Goncalves distanced himself from total commitment to the revolutionary left by again attacking the leftism which he saw sweeping through the movement. He perceived a conflict between the institutionalisation of 'democratically' elected forces and the popular movements from below. Goncalves dared not risk a conflict with the latter. The Povo/MFA document was seen as a realistic response to the proven strength of the movement and a response which sought to contain and channel it by placing the MFA at its head. (18)

Douglas Porch, who noted that the Pact was a 'hybrid' of Goncalvist and COPCON philosophy, says

"The support of the Goncalvist officers was assured for those portions of the text which called for the development of a 'large state sector' and stressed the need for discipline." (19)

Captain Paulino, the spokesman for the fifth division and a PCP fellow traveller, stated that 'the state bureaucracy was installed by fascism to serve the interests of capitalism, not of the Portuguese people' and that popular democracy would come to replace the organisation of fascist power. (20)

As the PCP had been making ground within the workers' commissions it felt, perhaps, that it would have a decisive influence within the MFA scheme. The fragility of the alliance was to be severely exposed in the popular assemblies.

The plan was welcomed by the revolutionary left. MES supporters of the Povo/MFA pact cited the Pontinha assembly as living proof of the effectiveness of popular assemblies. *Voz do Povo*, the paper of the UDP, proclaimed (15/7/75) 'Forward with a vast movement of Democratic and Popular Assemblies'. The PRP was keen to show that the document was derived from the CRTSM's proposal so bitterly rejected 6 weeks before in the MFA assembly. The CRTSMs had not been able to win mass support so now the PRP backed the attempt by the MFA to build councils from above. On July 10th the political secretariat of the PRP stated: 'the approval of the Povo/MFA pact is a real victory for those who for months have struggled to create revolutionary councils', and their publications went

to some lengths to show that actually the Pact was closer to the CRTSMs than to the CDRs. The architects of the Pact were undoubtedly influenced by the CRTSMs. (21)

The Socialist Party found the situation intolerable. On July 10th, the day *Republica* was re-opened, it left the 4th Provisional Government closely followed by their allies, the PPD (Popular Democratic Party). The Socialist Party and PPD also gave the erosion of civil liberties, especially the freedom of the press, as reasons for resigning. The majority parties saw the Pact as an attempt to bypass them, which it was. By now the struggle between bourgeois and popular democracy, i.e. parliamentary pluralism versus popular assemblies, had become clearly polarised.

### 3 Some Early Examples

The Povo/MFA Pact was like a light shower of rain in the desert. Seeds had already been sown, now some began to germinate. Could they take root and blossom?

The idea of popular assemblies was widespread in the movement. On July 16th there was a large demonstration in support of popular power - specifically assemblies. MES was very influential in the organisation. Many hitched rides on friendly tanks supplied by RALIS, the first time tanks were seen in demonstrations other than Maydays and April 25.



In support of the same idea there was a demonstration two days later in Porto. *Voz Do Povo* claimed that 'more than 20,000 workers expressed their determination.' (22)

The theme was followed again and again on demonstrations, including the enormous one held on August 20th. The first speaker at the final rally was a member of a shanty town residents' commission. He argued in support of the assemblies:

"Comrades, the reign of capitalist exploitation, intensified by the fascist governments of Salazar and Caetano, threw the working class and the peasants into miserable conditions of life as seen in the shanty towns. Fighting against this exploitation alone and unorganised the struggles are not successful. The workers saw the necessity of forming workers' commissions in the factories, and *moradores* commissions in the shanty towns and poor areas that could represent and defend their interests.

These commissions, which at first worked only at neighbourhood or factory level, were isolated in their fight for rent reductions, for the elimination of the hut dwellings, for decent housing, for the 'saneamento' of the fascists from the factories, for the increase of wages, etc. . They realised that they were fighting the same struggle everywhere - the struggle to end the exploitation that was oppressing all.

It is in the Popular Assemblies that we are going to struggle to smash the fascists and imperialist beast by creating people's militias and people's courts where the fascists, the lackeys and the PIDE's will be tried. It is in the Popular Assemblies where we have to fight for nationalisation without compensation of all foreign firms. It is in the Popular Assemblies where we'll fight for land reform according to the will of the peasants and for a reduction of the price of fertiliser to at last put an end to the middle-men and parasites. It is in the Popular Assemblies where we fight for an end of the shanty towns, for the end to land speculation, for an end of absentee landlordism, and for the occupation of empty houses and for the control and distribution of products. In the Popular Assemblies we must also solve the problems of health, education and culture." (23)

Immediately after the pact was approved another group of organisations

clustered near RALIS, not that of Olivais Sul, convened the Marvila Popular Assembly, which they had been preparing since before the pact. Marvila is the area around the airport. The assembly met on the 13th of July and amongst other organisations, 23 workers' commissions were represented. (24)

Its scope, typical for a popular assembly, was defined as follows:

- 1 The Marvila Popular Assembly is the organisation of local workers and inhabitants of Marvila. It is autonomous and non-party and seeks to represent their interests at all levels.
- 2 The Marvila Popular Assembly recognises the CT's and CM's already elected.
- 3 The Marvila Popular Assembly will reinforce the alliance between the popular masses and the MFA, guaranteed by the CM's and CT's and by the ADU of RALIS.
- 4 The Marvila Popular Assembly aims at mobilising for a socialist society, contributing to the solution of the most pressing problems.
- 5 The Marvila Popular Assembly represents the class aspirations and organisations of the workers.
- 6 The Marvila Popular Assembly should progressively replace the organs of the state apparatus already decrepit and inefficient, taking into its own hands the power to legislate at a local level, over all the problems which affect the workers.

One of its first tasks was to elect a provisional secretariat, whose names were to be made public, with the exception of those from RALIS. Much of the projected programme was taken up 'detecting the existing problems in the workplaces and the localities'.

At the same time, one week after the Povo/MFA pact, an assembly was convoked in the north of Lisbon, called 'Our Lady of Fatima' (Nossa

*Senhora de Fatima*) which was the name of the area. I interviewed one of its leading activists who was also a member of MES in early 1976. She said

"It kept the name of the municipality which tells us something, and was set up a week after the Povo/MFA pact. We still had the local representatives from the junta. There were two military units in the area but we never went into the barracks.

Between 200 - 400 people came to the meetings, and about 25 different workers' commissions sent delegates. We divided into groups around the issues of workplaces, housing, education, creches and infant schools." (25)

In Setubal, despite the planning meeting on July 4th and the blessing of the Povo/MFA pact, it was not until July 25th that the first assembly was convened. This was called the committee of popular organisations - COPS. There were innumerable fierce debates about which bodies had the right to be represented and the role of political parties. The meeting on July 25th consisted of 300 people but without military representation, debated the CRTSMs and CDR proposals and allowed participation from these two organisations, but without voting rights. COPS decided in principle to elect committees of armed vigilantes. (*Capital* 26/7/75)

The biggest meeting was on August 6th, where 50 workers' commissions and 30 residents' bodies met with members of the MFA. My notes from 1975 record that an officer from the MFA present condescended to express the view that

"this body is nothing to do with popular assemblies.. its not just a case of structure - this meeting is not representative"

It may be that this man was sympathetic to the PRP who had not participated in the formation of COPS, being more committed to the

CRTSMs.

The assemblies did not meet only in the larger towns. *República* (16/7/75) carries a short report on a planning meeting in a village called Palmela, on the northern outskirts of Setubal. Palmela could only boast two medium size firms (Control Data and Cometna which employed 600 and 530 workers respectively). Most other work in the area such as wine production, tomato canning and meat production was linked to the agricultural sector. (26)

It was reported that the residents' commissions of Quinta do Anjo and Cabanas (in the council of Palmela) had an emergency meeting with 25 people present. This meeting unanimously approved the COPCON document and proposed to call a popular assembly on the 22nd of July. The preliminary meeting had already received messages of support for the COPCON document from the workers of the Arsenal do Alfeite and the leadership of the Merchant Seamen's Union. (*República* 16/8/75)

A delegation from the British based solidarity organisation the PWCC (Portuguese Workers' Co-ordinating Committee) decided to visit an assembly. The M.P. Audrey Wise wrote up an account, much of which is quoted here because it provides a detailed example of a fairly typical meeting. (27)

"We went along to a meeting at Palmela, a village about 20 miles south of Lisbon. About 200 people were present, probably a quarter of them women. The meeting was held in a place used as a semi open-air cinema. There were light-weight walls, and a metal framework roof covered with thickly growing plants, the framework being used to support lighting.

A neighbourhood committee had sprung up and been in operation for some weeks, and this meeting was an attempt to broaden and formalise it."

In his opening remarks the man chairing the meeting stressed

"the need for people to talk freely and say what was in their minds."

He emphasised that everybody in the village had had the opportunity to come, and he again stressed the need for people to say what they really meant, and to help to solve the problems of the neighbourhood. He continued

"The Armed Forces Movement (MFA) is deeply involved in these attempts to build direct democracy or 'popular power'. Its General Assembly carried a decision in its favour on July 8th, and it was this which really sparked off the alarm of the right-wing in Portugal. Nothing is more dangerous to the right-wing than people asserting themselves and attempting to come to their own decisions, and MFA commitment to direct democracy is of tremendous importance."

The member of the MFA at this meeting said

"Is it not the workers who create the wealth of a country? When the workers have control of the wealth they produce then we will have the Socialist Revolution.

'People's power' is democracy for all those who have nothing, and have everything to gain. The right to health, the right to housing, the right to education.

It is not enough to elect the neighbourhood committee and think they will solve the problems for you. It is necessary for people themselves to co-operate in solving problems.

The functions of Workers' Committees and Neighbourhood Committees are complementary. People must not think in terms of each one for himself but must think collectively for the benefit of the group. Each one for himself is a relic of the dark 50 years of fascism."

Audrey Wise concluded

"the meeting had been a fascinating experience ... a situation where reform and revolution were not alternatives but were actually part of the same process.

Democracy was struggling into being in this village, and it was a rare treat to be able to witness it."

#### 4 An Over-all View

There is no systematic record of where assemblies were formed, how many times they met, or what they did. As there are a lot of references to what is rather a loose term, this section presents a brief definition of what constitutes an assembly and some of its predominant features.

Before the MFA pact there were a number of references to 'popular assemblies' but these could mean any popular meetings open to all people in the locality. A local meeting organised by the PCP jointly with the MDP/CDE, where there would be little overt emphasis upon the political parties, might call itself a popular assembly. The concept as presented by the Povo/MFA was of an open meeting, the assembly, which included democratically elected delegates from the armed forces units, the workplaces and residents' organisations within the area. While these three types of representation would form the backbone other organisations could also participate. After the Povo/MFA pact the press tended to refer to this type of organisation.

In practice residents' commissions were always present but by no means all the assemblies included delegates from workers' commissions and/or local barracks. In the case of Palmela there is no record of the presence of any workers' commission (not very surprising), and, instead of representation from a barracks, an officer attended on behalf of

COPCON. In other areas, for other reasons, the assemblies failed to include representation from all three wings. These meetings often called themselves 'popular assemblies'. I have compiled a list of known assemblies. Where the organisation clearly was no more than a collection of residents' organisations it has not been included. The list is not exhaustive. The main source of this list is newspapers, especially *Republica* and *Diario Popular*. (28) The references are usually extremely brief. In-depth articles tend to come from the far left.

Some meetings called themselves assemblies when it is quite clear that the name had been only an afterthought. This is the case with the Loures meeting of the 6th of July. It has been incorporated in the list of assemblies only because it emerged in early November. (29)

It is important to note that, on the other hand, there were many meetings, and organisations, which included delegates from all three sectors but chose not to call themselves 'assemblies'. This may be because the organisation dealt with a specific issue or because the participants decided not to call themselves popular assemblies for ideological reasons. The most noticeable example is the Setubal Comité de Luta. These have not been included.

The experimental nature of the assemblies is shown by the fact that they were often called 'provisional' assemblies. Although the number of participants could be in the hundreds, such as the series in Gondomar, the participants hesitated to label them as meetings of their Popular Assembly. This may be because the proposed constitutional procedure had

not been fulfilled. Undoubtedly the 'provisional' label indicated a feeling that more had to be done. Some would call an assembly 'provisional' while others would drop the tag. There were examples of assemblies being later deemed to be provisional. This is how RALIS regarded Marvila, which it claimed to replace. Sometimes the names changed with changes in circumstances. The 7th Zone of Lisbon emerged out of RALIS. To complicate matters still further this was sometimes known as 'The Assembly Oriental'. In general these provisional organisations have been included in the list. I have excluded only provisional secretariats or organisations which did not call assemblies.

Applying these criteria 38 different popular and provisional popular assemblies can be identified:



No.	NAME & LOCATION	SOURCE	DATE SOURCE	DATE EVENT
01	Pontinha, north Lisbon	Movimento	250775	290675
02	COPS Setubal	Other		040775
03	Marvila, NE Lisbon	Movimento	140775	130775
04	Our Lady of Fatima, N.Lisbon	Other		180775
05	Almada	Capital	260775	250775
06	Vialonga, interior	Republica	300775	280775
07	Tomar, Centre	V.d.Povo	050875	
08	Albernoa, Beja	D.Popular	090875	
09	Palmela, north of Setubal	Republica	160875	220875
10	Cascais, Lisbon coast	D.Popular	111075	121075
11	Alto do Pinha	V.d.Povo	020975	
12	Porto	Republica	060975	
13	Penhas de Franca	D.Popular	090975	130975
14	Lumiar	Republica	190975	190975
15	Velha Cidade (Zona), Lisbon	Republica	230975	240975
16	Coimbra	O Seculo	260975	260975
17	Torres Vedras, Ericeria/Peniche	V.d.Povo	300975	
18	Gondomar (or Fanzares), nr Porto	D.Lisboa	300975	
19	Cova da Piedade	O Seculo	011075	021075
20	Alcantra	D.Popular	111075	
21	RALIS, NE Lisbon	Republica	131075	121075
22	Faro, Algarve	P.Popular	021075	280975
23	Amadora	D.Popular	290975	081075
24	Vila Franca de Xira, E of Lis.	Republica	131075	151075
25	Sines	Republica	151075	161075
26	Lagos	Republica	171075	181075
27	S. Domingos de Rana, Lis coast	D.Popular	230975	220975
28	Aqualva-Cacem	Republica	231075	
29	Odivelas	D.Popular	061175	121175
30	Loures	Republica	291075	091175
31	Vila Nova de Gaia	Republica	301075	
32	Barreiro (Palheis), sth Barreiro	Republica	151175	
33	Carnaxide, near Benfica	Republica	151175	
34	Alchochete, E of Barreiro	Republica	181175	
35	Torres Novas, near Santarem	D.Popular	220975	280975
36	Alpiarca, near Santarem	D.Popular	110775	
37	Oriental (7th Zone of Lisbon)	D.Popular	131075	
38	Occidental, Lisbon	Republica	151275	121275

The date given refers to the first meeting, which may have been only a planning meeting. The only case for which there has been no press reference is 'Our Lady of Fatima'. Fourteen examples of supposed Popular Assemblies have been omitted because the source has been too slight or

it is clear that they were no more than open meetings, without different types of delegates. These fourteen references are to:

NAME & LOCATION	Source & date; event date
Viana do Castelo, north of Porto	Capital 201175 201175
Beja	Other
Braga	P.Popular 231075
Bairro da Liberdade, nr camping park	V.d.Povo 220775 251075
Baixa de Banheira	Combate 121275 301175
Olivais-Sul, NE Lisbon	Republica 100775 220675
Grandola, Alentejo	Avante 301075 201075
Lapa, Lisbon	Republica 171275 151275
Casal Ventosa, Lisbon?	Republica 160875 130875
Evora	P.Popular 231075 141075
Rua Olivenca (Barracas) Alges	V.d.Povo 090975
Setubal	Republica 251175
Vila Franca do Conchelo	Other
Sacavem	D.Popular 131175

Several hundred people were typically reported as being present at the meetings. A sample list of attendances as reported in the press follows:

Number	ASSEMBLY	Date	Reference
Hundreds	Almada	250775	<i>Capital</i> p.14 260775
130	Bairro da Liberdade-Olaio	251075	<i>Republica</i> p.6 291075
300	COPS		<i>Capital</i> p.14 260775
300	Gondomar	251075	<i>Republica</i> p.9 291075
Hundreds	RALIS	12107	<i>Republica</i> p.4 300975
100-200	Vialonga	280775	<i>Republica</i> p.8 300775
250	Vila Nova de Gaia		<i>Republica</i> p.5 301075

The tradition of accurate counting was not very strong and did not appear to be necessary. The larger meetings were more likely to have their attendances mentioned in newspaper reports. Organisers would have been generous in their estimates and the press not unsympathetic. But it would be wrong to infer that, because only a handful of the reports

actually give numbers, the rest of the meetings were necessarily much smaller. Attendance at the meetings I went to or heard about was usually in the hundreds.

The reported 130 in attendance at the Bairro da Liberdade meeting was an unusually precise and presumably accurate figure. (*Republica* 29/10/75)

The fact that many meetings called themselves provisional assemblies is not necessarily an indication that they were insignificant. *Republica* reports a number of planning meetings for the assembly of Lumiar.

(Lumiar is also in North Lisbon, to the north of the Fatima assembly and to the east of Pontinha.) Often they were held within the local barracks E.P.A.M. - *Escola practicum de Administracao Militar*.

I attended and made notes at Lumiar's reputedly first proper assembly towards the end of October. The meeting was intended to begin at nine thirty but started well after ten. At one-thirty in the morning when we left it was still going on. There were between 100 and 150 people. The only newspaper in represented was *Socialist Worker*. Sympathetic newspapers did carry reports but these were mainly official press releases and often failed to deal with the debates and dissension let alone convey the atmosphere.

Furthermore, the very nature of newspaper reporting precluded mention of non-events such as poorly attended meetings and the decline of the assemblies. Perhaps these can be discerned through the very lack of coverage.

In spite of all the enthusiasm and planning many, indeed the majority, of these assemblies never got past the initial meetings. For example COPS in Setubal collapsed quickly. Downes pinpoints the date as the 22nd of August. Certainly by early September, after eight meetings, the organisation had died.

The assembly of 'Our Lady of Fatima', which had 'divided into groups around the issues of workplaces, housing, education, creches and infant schools' never held another full meeting. (30)

Pontinha, the most famous of the assemblies, in spite of its auspicious start, had melted away by the early autumn of 1975. The producer of the film *Portugal: on the Side of the People* told how in the late summer of 1975

"We spent 6 weeks trying to film the Pontinha Popular Assembly, which was the only working assembly, and it did not meet once in 6 weeks during the height of the struggle." (31)

## 5 REPRESENTATION

Inevitably the institutions of popular democracy were uneven organisationally, often barely formed. At the Palmela meeting Audrey Wise noticed problems in chairing and following the agenda, which contained 18 items. She describes how a woman went to the front of the meeting and said she had something to say. She was handed the microphone

and said:

"I would like to make an observation. People have been called here to discuss many problems. I came with maximum interest to follow a certain agenda. . . There are things which must be dealt with objectively and calmly. In a small village like ours we must not get excited."

*To the Chairman she said:*

"You said at the beginning that people had the right to come here with all freedom and all sincerity. It is very important that we understand the problems of the Revolution and the position in relation to the MFA, but on the other hand there are also other problems which we need to discuss. We were told the meeting should finish at midnight and it is now 11 p.m., but we are still on the first part of the agenda. We have problems of flies etc. There are some points which are more important than ours and we have been hearing about them, but these other problems are also important to us. I apologise but I must insist. I think you have gone on too long, and this leads to confusion. I am sorry. I apologise, but it is my duty to say this."

*The chairman then replied*

"I must criticise myself. The lady is quite right. I made a mistake. We will go on to the second point on the agenda."

*The second item concerned representation on the committee. The chairman said:*

"We have no women. We must have some women. Many of the things we are talking about are of great importance to women and they should be there." (32)

Wise continues her description:

"He asked for volunteers. Four women stood up and were voted on, but only three were elected. One was clearly not at all popular, and there were mutterings from people near us, saying 'She doesn't look after her children properly', and she failed to get elected. However, this was not opposition to her simply because she had children, as two of the women who were elected actually had babies in their arms, and they were elected without any difficulty. It was very clearly the first time women had played such parts." (33)

Poder Popular created an atmosphere in which the so-called 'marginal' sectors gained confidence and sent delegates, a notable example being the ex-servicemen disabled in the wars. The participation of the 'marginal' sections was welcomed. Youngsters and women were mobilised.

Despite the euphoria there were often sharp arguments about who could be representatives. One case involved incest. After the majority had voted to suspend the suspected culprit, he dramatically produced a huge board which displayed his war medals and protested that he had been a hard worker. The chairman ruled that

"we must ask this man to work with us and to rehabilitate himself so that he is worthy of his place on the committee again" (34)

Often the assemblies in rural areas stressed the need to foster links with small and medium-sized agricultural organisations, some of which included employers. The assemblies at Alpiarca and Torres Novas held a joint meeting consisting of 110 such organisations from within the region of Santarem. They were acutely aware of the fact that they were only two in a region which consisted of twenty municipal councils.

(*Capital* 19/11/75)

There were healthy debates about which organisations could send delegates. A meeting of residents in Almada held on the 25th of July attracted a delegation from the Navy. Unusually representatives from the GNR and PSP also attended. (*Capital* 26/07/75)

The opening item on the agenda of what was proclaimed to be the first meeting of the popular assembly of Lumiar, in mid October, was 'Who was present.'

"At this meeting there were between 100-150 people. There were delegates from ten factories, from one of the five barracks in the area (EPAM), ten to fifteen tenant bodies and a number of interest groups like the disabled soldiers' movement. It was a fantastic mix of people, from cranks to teenage revolutionaries. But all the members of the parties obeyed the code of not declaring their political allegiance.

A serious question arose as to whether some tenants bodies should have representation because they were landlords, and not proper residents' commissions. A speaker from the shanty towns demanded 'an enquiry into the class nature of these commissions'. Unofficial residents' commissions from 'fascist' areas were allowed as participants, but with no voting rights.

There was disagreement over the participation of bodies from the local authorities who argued that they had the right to vote as they were elected by the municipality. Although there was some discussion about whether the local authorities were part of the State, the fact was that the majority weren't elected and it was unanimously agreed the local authorities should have no vote.

There was an unsuccessful move to separate the delegates from the observers. Each commission of tenants and workers was accredited with a card saying how many delegates and votes it had." (35)

The RALIS assembly called on the 12th of October is the only one on record where workers' commissions were in the majority. Twenty of the thirty-three organisations were CTs and only six were CMs. This was partly due to the proximity of the large Cabo Ruivo industrial estate and partly due to the militancy of the workers in the area. (36)

The CTs did not necessarily represent manual industrial workers. For example at the first meeting of the Odivelas assembly there were 28 people representing ten CTs. Seven of the CTs and 25 of the people were from local schools. (There were also 75 people from seventeen CMs, four from the local Junta de Freguesia and six from three other organisations; giving a total of 113 people from 31 bodies.) (37)

Usually CMs were the dominant type of organisation. Some meetings had no representation from workers' commissions although there weren't always many CTs in the locality. Nevertheless CT representation was typically

slight. In a town like Sines there were eighteen organisations affiliated to the Assembly Popular de Concelho de Sines, thirteen of which were CMs and only one a CT. (*Republica* 15/10/75)

At the largest assembly at Gondomar (south east of Porto, sometimes known as Fanzares) held, after six planning meetings, 75 organisations were represented but there were only four CTs and one union. (38)

The importance of the CMs was deliberately fostered by the MFA. Otelo Carvalho frequently expressed the view that the CMs were crucial to the revolution.

"I have an immense sympathy for the residents' committees which I think have been the blood cells of the people who are living the Portuguese revolution, people who are not sitting in front of the television set or reading the newspaper but who come outside on to the streets to live the revolution, fighting for the welfare of the community so that other families may have a home and interesting themselves deeply in this matter. I think its amazing because of the altruism, the integration with society with its enormous problems." (39)

Although they were the strength of the movement the predominance of the residents' organisations was also a source of weakness.

"In general it was very easy to set up popular assemblies but they were very diluted, people came from all over, and then only some of the people came." (40)

The residents' movement saw the need for the assemblies much more clearly than workers' commissions did. But the CMs also acknowledged the important role of the CTs. For example the Lumiar assembly weighted the secretariat heavily in favour of the workers' commissions. The composition was of four residents' commissions, one barracks and CTs from six factories. (41) The CTs were welcomed but in practice the assemblies were not used as a means for developing workplace struggles.



Often workers' commissions had been able to win most of the simple economic battles on their own.

## 6 Practical Activities

The meeting in Bairro da Liberdade - Orlaio, where it was reported that precisely 130 people were in attendance, is also one of a few examples of a sizeable attendance from one workforce. At this meeting there were twenty from the construction firm Tomas Jose Orlaio. But the example is negative. This small town, which is now a dormitory suburb for Lisbon, was at that time being rapidly developed. Local residents objected to the 'stealing of the green land by the capitalists' and managed to stop the development of three blocks of seven floor flats. The workers turned out and demanded to know what would come of the promises of alternative employment. (*Republica* 29/10/75)

The workers from the Alfeite naval base provided, promoted and participated in social and sports activities organised under the auspices of the Almada assembly. (*Capital* 26/7/75)

There are a number of cases where workers helped in community projects such as levelling a playground, but instances of organised collaboration with CTs were rare. The main role of the CTs was to harness support for 'popular power' in places of work, generally organised around demonstrations.

Demonstrations were also the focal point for the assemblies. Quite often the only reference to an assembly in the press was when it, or in the case of Agualva Cacem, its secretariat, supported the call for one.

(*Republica* 23/10/75) In the case of Carnaxide the only evidence is that the provisional secretariat supported the call for a demonstration, in this instance the massive one of 16th of November. (*Republica* 15/11/75) Sometimes demonstrations preceded the assemblies as in Faro where there was talk of setting up an assembly following their 'thousands strong' demonstration commemorating the 28th of September. (*Poder Popular* 2/10/75)

Sometimes the demonstrations were for specific purposes, like that called by the assembly of Tomar in support of Jose Diogo, a farmworker who had been accused of killing his employer. (*Voz do Povo* 5/08/75)

Normally the meetings were intended to deal with practical, local, activities. The agenda of the Lumiar meeting, already referred to, was as follows:

- 1 Who was present
- 2 Methods of work
- 3 Information about the hospital
- 4 How to use the money from the town hall
- 5 The Municipal council.

Such items could involve residents but tended to preclude direct participation by workers' organisations. A lot of time was spent talking about the local hospital and how it was to be used. This included

discussion on the reclaiming of equipment seized from it. There was a proposal for setting up an enquiry, which would take three weeks. A local doctor was allowed to deliver a lengthy monologue and bore many members of the audience. (42)

Frequently the attempted organisation of practical activities was undermined by organisational problems. At Pontinha the point was reached where the leading activists decided to suspend operations until they got the organisational formula right.

"All we did was plan and discuss how it should operate. While the planning was taking place all practical activity ceased.

The whole process never reached the point where the CTs and the CMs were able to present what they were interested in doing. That was discussed. Build up a plan based on those priorities and work on it. But the process ended before there was any possibility of establishing and implementing this plan.

Here the Popular Assembly never did anything. What they made was a structure in which people prioritised their needs, which the regiment and the workers would then carry out. The assembly itself did nothing." (43)

Hence the demise of the most famous of all the assemblies. This obsession with planning, with finding the right formula, was evident elsewhere. The COPS formation in Setubal suffered from a crippling obsession with statutes and organisational forms at most of its meetings. Downes quotes one participant as saying

"many discussions were used up discussing statutes. Who has the right to vote? Who does not? Do the trade unions vote? Sporting Clubs? Who has more votes? How many? Who has fewer? Meetings were used up that way on the objectives also; for a popular democratic revolution; for a socialist revolution, to defend democratic liberties . . . . No one ever reached agreement on anything. The problems were so theoretical, and at the same time so bureaucratic.

. . . things did not get very far because there were no

concrete functions for the organisation to carry out." (44)

Many assemblies planned and prepared documents. Even as late as the middle-of-November the assembly being set up at Marvila, near the RALIS barracks, was dominated by discussion of organisational forms. The paper presented to the assembly of RALIS, dated 29/10/75, consists of 12 sides of A3 paper dealing with frequency with which meetings should be planned, the political problems, dual power and socialism in the locality. It includes an organisational chart showing the various components of the assembly (the residents' commissions, the workers' committees and other popular structures, divided again into sub-components). (45)

Immediately following the Povo/MFA proposals it was clear that some regarded the assemblies as a form of local government. 'Our Lady of Fatima' (*Nossa Senhora de Fatima*) took its name from the Camara Freguesia. (46) I interviewed a leading member of the assembly, a member of MES, in early 1976. She said

"It maintained the name of the municipality which itself tells us something. We still had the local representatives from the *Junta de Freguesia*. Unlike at Pontinha there was nobody who wanted an executive and secretariat. There was a mess of a discussion and we divided into groups to talk about problems. At the first meeting the PCP officer from the MFA could not explain the point of the assembly - and he went on about CDR's, which should still be preserved. The different sections all approved the CDR's but in most there was no vote and there had been no meeting, since the beginning, of all the people present. There was no way of raising any issue. The PCP was opposed to direct democracy - its solution was administrative, maintain the structure and change the men. For it this popular assembly fitted into the existing structure." (47)

The 'Nossa Senhora' assembly did not call another full meeting. This was probably not by design, unlike that at Torres Vedras (40 km north of

Lisbon) where the assembly was to be subordinate to the PCP-dominated Junta and was intended to meet only twice a year. (*Voz do Povo* page 6, 30/9/75)

By contrast in Porto

"in order to be genuine and representative, the municipal council of Porto has enlarged itself, and in such a manner as to resemble a municipal popular assembly" (*Republica* 06/9/75)

Municipal workers' organisations and the barracks ADU's were represented and the meetings were held weekly. Openness and democratisation meant that many saw no need to set up an alternative assembly. Because of its militancy this council was to be shut down. (For further details refer to section eight of this chapter.)

Nearby the inhabitants of Gondomar considered creating an organisation somewhat similar to the Porto Municipal council. They organised a demonstration outside the municipal headquarters on the 17th of October. (*Republica* 25/10/75)

The provisional Lumiar assembly, which received a grant from the local Junta de Freguesia, was among the organisations which organised a demonstration to reclaim the Camara Municipal Lisbon. (*Republica* 10/10/75 and 14/10/75)

The assembly at Alchochete went one step further. It elected the municipal council at a Popular Assembly. Furthermore it had the support of the Civil Governor of Setubal. (*Republica* 18/11/75) The most durable of the assemblies were those which grafted themselves on to municipal

politics. A PCP militant, who was imprisoned under fascism, told me

"the assembly at Pontinha was nothing, it was a myth, fabricated by the left. There was a much more important assembly of Loures, which incorporated that of Pontinha and successfully took up the day-to-day problems."

In order to prove his point he gave me copies of more than 150 pages of documents, from Odivelas as well as Loures, illustrating how local issues had been taken up. These showed actions equivalent to that of a municipal council, not that of a workers' council. (48)

## 7 The Role of Officers

Whilst protagonists of Popular Power within the MFA helped stimulate questions of power and 'dual power', most of the officers were not committed to the assemblies' assuming what they saw as the unique role of the MFA. Few members of the military placed great emphasis upon the assemblies emerging as the alternative source of power.

As in the political parties the impact of the officers varied from assembly to assembly, but the influence usually mirrored their political allegiance. The unlikely mixture within the MFA which narrowly carried the Povo/MFA pact meant that the representatives from the MFA were often inconsistent.

At 'Our Lady of Fatima' the PCP officer from the MFA could not explain the point of the assembly; as a MES member put it:

"this was not a PCP project but the attitude of the PCP was 'if you can't beat them join them'." (49)

In Pontinha, Lumiar and Marvila, junior officers (predominantly members of MES) were particularly active. Perhaps the organisational paralysis of these assemblies was a reflection of the junior officers offering their services to the class, proposing solutions which ultimately they could not fulfil.

There was a sharp argument in the far left about the role of the officers. For example, a criticism by the PRP of the assembly of Pontinha was that it was chaired by an official of the MFA who was not elected. According to MES militants this was

"Not a problem. Soldiers and officers formed political blocks which were against other soldiers and officers. The political blocks could not be mechanically reflected by the proletarian/bourgeois division. The fact that an officer presided over the Pontinha assembly does not mean that the agents of the bourgeoisie were being represented. That you had officers from the MFA participating in these things helped to create a space in the MFA: it was a powerful strategy to involve the MFA in the decisions taken.

Any other strategy would put a gap between the Povo dynamic and the MFA." (50)

There were other reasons for the officers', and not the soldiers', playing a dominant part. The Pontinha assemblies were held at week-ends when soldiers usually went home to their families. In general the junior officers, inspired by the MFA and better educated, were more articulate than rank and file soldiers and they would often be elected by the soldiers to represent them. The same occurred in the early months of 1917 in the Russian Soviets. Trotsky wrote

"a special representation was often given, particularly in the provinces, to the commanding staff." (51)

Popular Power underplayed the pivotal role of the working class. It bred

mutual illusions between the workers and the military. Often the advocates of alternative forms of power were still obsessed with the armed forces.

Tony Cliff wrote at the time

"The MFA, obviously, is not as consistent, effective, or directly rooted in the masses as a workers' or soldiers' council. . . The activities of members of the army and especially of COPCON, when they come to the aid of workers, tenants, schoolchildren, etc, are very similar to many activities of workers' councils in previous revolutions. . . But acting as a surrogate, as a substitute, the MFA prevented the workers (and soldiers) from making the effort to build real councils for quite a long time. . .

The fact that the MFA has been forced into concessions has fostered the belief in the minds of many workers that it is somehow on their side and that they can rely on the army to solve their problems for them rather than seeing the need to rely on themselves.

So although Portuguese workers see themselves as a class, with interests of their own to defend, they do not all see these interests as sufficiently different from those of other classes to demand the creation of their own class organs." (52)

## 8 PARTIES and POLITICS

The Communist Party and the parties further to the left supported a framework which would link different popular organisations. Despite their attempts to be above parties and outside party manipulation, the assemblies were very dependent on the political groups concerned.

The officers in the Pontinha assembly took some pride from the fact that 'theirs' was born out of local inter-action between the military and



civilians. It was claimed that it, and the regiment for that matter, was unlike others because it was not clearly identified with a party line. But it was no secret that MES had been a formative influence. Indeed, low and local profile and lack of emphasis on party politics was precisely the line of MES.

The fact that some parties, inevitably, were more dominant than others actually affected the support forthcoming from the 'less influential' groups. The Pontinha project, although held up as an example by the cultural wing of the MFA, did not enjoy widespread support from the parties.

"The PCP was against Pontinha. The UDP at first supported it but very critically after the beginning. Otelo was against the assembly (influenced by Isabel and Carlos from the PRP)." (53)

It has been shown that the assembly in Setubal, COPS, was launched, not by officers from the barracks or MFA, but by the PCP with the MDP/CDE, the FSP, MES and the LCI.

The blame for the failure of COPS has been placed squarely at the door of the PCP

"COPS was a very stupid organisation. It did not come from the real necessity of the moment but it was an idea from the PCP..... We did not believe very much in COPS. Of course everybody was in it. It was conducted by the PCP and very *partidarised*. The big boss was the PCP. Not very interesting for us as a movement." (54)

Downes also shows that many blamed the PCP influence.

'it was seen by many who had been most active in the CMs and CTs as a conscious attempt to destroy the autonomous organisations and bring things under the control of the PCP and less political groups.' (55)

There had been innumerable violent debates about the function of, and between, the political parties. It is clear that in the case of COPS, the domination and suspicion of the PCP and the political wrangling between the left groups were contributory causes of the ensuing paralysis of the not-so-popular assembly.

Acrimony surfaced elsewhere. At Amadora the CM from Reboleira censured the provisional secretariat for its 'anti-democratic, non revolutionary manner of preparing the first assembly'. (*Republica* 17/10/75)

At the end of October there was a large demonstration of popular organisations in Lisbon. In fact it had been called by the PCP. Somebody from Amadora spoke at the culminating rally, on behalf of Popular Assemblies. (*Avante* 30/10/75)

The PCP strategy had been to set up assemblies which organised demonstrations in their own localities which in turn would build towards the Lisbon demonstration. Presumably the speaker from Amadora was chosen because the delegation was significant and, also, the speaker could be relied on. Although supporters of the PCP dominated the Amadora assembly it is quite clear that it was torn apart by organisational differences. These were political. The CT do Centro Profissional de Venda Nova criticised the demonstration sponsored by the local assembly as being badly organised with poor slogans and dominated by the overt PCP influence. Only 15 of the 80 affiliated organisations attended the meeting in Sorefame calling for the local demonstration. Because of this poor turnout the demonstration was cancelled but this was revoked by the

secretariat. The demonstration had been called at three days notice.

(*Voz do Povo* 21/10/75)

In Porto the Revolutionary Council of Porto Residents (CRMP) had been created to coordinate the participation of CM delegates in the municipal council which worked very closely with the military administration. The military had, in May, taken over the running of the city council. According to Isabel do Carmo this was one of the most developed political organisations to have emerged in 1974-5. (56) The CRMP was broadening its base to include CTs and had undertaken a wide range of practical activities. With the advent of the 6th Provisional Government, in September, the commander for the northern military region, who had actively supported the CRMP, was ousted. Hammond describes subsequent events:

"His successor, Colonel Antonio Pires Velosa, immediately took a hard line, demanding discipline of his troops and telling base organizations that they could not expect assistance from the units, which would be restricted to military duties.

The loss of support had a devastating effect on the commissions in Oporto. Some activists wanted to declare the CRMP itself the city government. The Council had reached beyond the neighborhood commissions to include workers' commissions and other base organizations throughout the city. Instead of demanding to govern in its own name, however, it urged the Military Commission members to withdraw their resignations."

Nevertheless the military were withdrawn from the CRMP and the civil governor, a member of the PS, ordered the dissolution of the CRMP.

Hammond shows how the PCP used the idea of a popular assembly to deter some activists.

"Defying this order the CRMP invaded the City Hall and held a meeting. But the PCP chose this moment to create a popular assembly to compete with the CRMP". (57)

Hammond then argues that PCP's effort to create a popular assembly was irrelevant and in practice both the popular assembly and the CRMP were overtaken by events.

Time and time again activists say that the political differences were destructive. Mailer blames all political parties for the collapse of the Popular Assemblies:

"the coming together of soldiers from the ADUs and delegates concerned both with work (from the CTs) and with housing (from the CMs), represents an interesting attempt to break down the barriers traditionally separating these functions. But as in so many other areas, forms alone were insufficient. The most active militants in the Popular assemblies were Leninists of one kind or another - with all that that implies in terms of behaviour and concerns." (58)

Downes and Guerra would not go as far as to blame the left parties *per se*. Socialist Party members did participate in certain areas but not generally. The parties were often judged by how they operated inside the assemblies especially by what they said in attempting to build them. The *apartidaria* complaint was that the activists would not say to which party they belonged. People often played a guessing game of 'spot the party'. The parties which kept a low profile, such as MES, LUAR (when present) and the PRP, were often well received. I remember the paradox of an extremely able and political member of the PRP refusing to intervene at an assembly because he did not want to over-influence the course of discussion. He was eventually provoked sufficiently to make one of his characteristically learned and impassioned speeches - on a procedural technicality.

Central to the ideology was the blaming of the parties. Abegao said of

Pontinha "It was a good experience and the only positive experience - which was destroyed by *partidarism*". (59) But in the same discussion and virtually the same breath he said "we did not have time to consolidate the assembly", the inference being that the pressure of external circumstances governed the life of the assembly. Activists were caught up in external events. Supporters of the UDP argued the Pontinha collapse was due in part to neglect by the officer activists.

The ebb and flow of the assemblies was, inevitably, subject to external political events. With hindsight it is clear that there were two phases in their existence. The first, in the months of July and August, was the result of the Povo/MFA pact. The next started from mid-September. The now 6th Provisional government was attacking the gains of popular power, and this was epitomised by the closure of Radio Renascença.

Some assemblies emerged only in this latter period and other assemblies which had become moribund attempted to resurrect themselves. Those at Olivais and the neighbouring Muscavide collapsed and after several months of preparation a new combination, RALIS, emerged. This in turn collapsed after November 25 but re-appeared as the assembly for the 7th zone of Lisbon, or the Oriental as it was sometimes called.

The agendas of many of the meetings were primarily concerned with organisational and local matters. This was so of the meeting at Lumiar which I attended. But the subjects of discussion at that meeting were far from parochial. My notes read:

"Much more was mentioned and discussed. The issue of Fretilin

and Timor, solidarity with the MPLA - overwhelming in spite of the Maoists, a television programme about workers' control in Yugoslavia, and the demobilisation of fifteen thousand conscripts in five days time - fifteen thousand soldiers who had served through April 1974." (60)

All the assemblies could not help discussing general events. The most radical of them, the most political were generally, those in which officers from the Fifth division and Copcon, to the left of the PCP, were active. They wanted to reform, even overturn existing institutions with the aid of the assemblies. The discussions were necessarily 'political'. There was talk of arming the population and Lumiar even organised arms-training sessions for the 'population'. There is a famous photograph of the new recruits at the RALIS barracks swearing their everlasting allegiance to the struggles of the people and the working class. This ceremony was supervised by an officer member of MES and organised in conjunction with the local assembly. Poignantly the swearing-in was organised on the 23rd of November. Within days the resistance of the combined forces of RALIS and its assembly were to crumble.

The assemblies dominated by left-wing officers, such as Pontinha and RALIS, were secondary to the manoeuvrings within the MFA, and subjugated the developments of the MFA in relation to other forces in civil society.

One of the reasons RALIS, Lumiar and Almada were unable to mobilise workers on November 25th was because they had in the past disregarded on the bread and butter issues. We have seen that in Pontinha the regiment's fine record of community improvements was actually brought to

an end by the setting up of the assembly.

By contrast the most durable of the assemblies were those ones which tended not to generalise but to distance themselves from national politics and to concentrate on municipal politics. In effect they supplemented and sometimes replaced municipal organisations. They were driven by the needs of the *moradores*, as expressed through the CMs. Given the incredible degree of political awareness it would be a distortion to suggest that general political discussions were abandoned. It was thought simply that other vehicles would be more effective in maintaining the pressure of reform. The strategy of the PCP, the dominant force in the municipalisation of the assemblies, was to win control of the existing local structures, not overthrow them. In consequence aspects of political generalisation were often under-developed in favour of local issues.

Some popular assemblies concerned themselves with general politics. Others gathered around the parish pump. But there is little evidence that any of them managed to reconcile these extremes. Divisions between general and local issues were not breached.

## Popular Assemblies - References

- 1 Interview with Jorge Abegao (February 1976) and used in Peterson, *The Failure of Workers' Power in Portugal*; International Discussion Bulletin number 5, London, International Socialists, November 1977.
- 2 Interview with Jorge Abegao, 5/5/84. \*
- 3 Derived from interview with Jorge Abegao, February 1976 \* and Sweezy, *Class Struggles in Portugal*, Monthly Review.
- 4 1976 notes; also refer to Peterson, *op cit*.
- 5 Interview with Mauricio Levy and Jorge Abegao, 5/5/84. \*
- 6 Examples include *Expresso*, 5/7/75 and a five page article in *Spartacus*, August/September, 1975.
- 7 Quoted in *Red Weekly*, 24/7/75 (no 111).
- 8 Interview with TAP worker, 5/8/82. \*
- 9 *Republica*, 10/7/75, page 5. (This was the first issue published after the workers took over.)
- 10 *Movimento*, 14/8/75.
- 11 With regards to COPS Downes writes on page 466 of his PhD dissertation (*Community Organisation, Political Change and Urban Policy: Portugal 1974-1976*) that  
"There was no apparent local reason for its appearance at this time. It never developed any roots, and none of the CMs had any recollection of their participation in it, even though newspaper reports from the time show that virtually all the CMs then existing must have sent representatives."
- 12 The details of these proceedings are to be found in the duplicated documents, called *1 Encontro das organizacoes populares do Concelho de Loures*. The author has copies of these papers.
- 13 Rosa Coutinho interviewed by John Woollacott, Lisbon 11/4/81 said  
"The PAP was drawn up largely by the 'navy group' (Rosa Coutinho, Contreiras, Guerreiro, Judas), but Vitor Alves was also there."
- 14 Vitor Alves interviewed by John Woollacott, Lisbon 24/4/81.
- 15 Interview with Jorge Abegao, 5/5/84. \*
- 16 Porch, *The Portuguese Armed Forces and the Revolution*, page 196.
- 17 Martin Kayman, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Portugal*. I have relied upon Kayman's description of Goncalves motivation, see pages 148/9.
- 18 *Ibid*, pages 147/8.
- 19 Porch, *The Portuguese Armed Forces and The Revolution*, page 197.
- 20 *Ibid*.
- 21 Refer to PRP/BR document *Conselhos Revolucionaries: Projecto Povo/MFA*.
- 22 *Voz Do Povo*, 25 July 1975, 'Numero especial'.
- 23 Taken from *Republica*, 21/7/75, page 9 and included in "Translations from the Portuguese Revolution" published by the PWCC.
- 24 *MFA bulletin*, page 4, dated 14/7/75.
- 25 Interview with 'Our Lady of Fatima' activist, February 1976. \*



26 The District of Setubal figures for local industry.  
 27 Audrey Wise, *Eyewitness in Revolutionary Portugal*, Pages 22-28.  
 28 I have used Bill Lomax's notes on popular assemblies for the *Diario Popular* references.  
 29 At the end of the day some of these judgements are little more than guesses.  
 30 Interview with 'Our Lady of Fatima' activist, December 1975. \*  
 31 Alan Hayley in an unpublished interview by John Woollacott.  
 32 Audrey Wise, *Eyewitness in Revolutionary Portugal*, pages 22/28.  
 33 *Ibid.*  
 34 Workers Fight, no 114, page 3, 25/10/75.  
 35 Author's notes.  
 36 *Republica*, 13/10/75, page 6, gives a list of all the organisations.  
 37 Taken from the documents produced by the assembly.  
 38 Refer to Gondomar documents  
 39 Interview with Otelo on the 25th of April published on the 17th of May in *Expresso*.  
 40 Interview with Jorge, 13/8/80. \*  
 41 Author's notes.  
 42 Author's notes.  
 43 Interview with Jorge Abegao, 5/5/84. \*  
 44 Downes, *Resident Commissions and Urban Struggles*, page 172.  
 45 These papers are in the author's collection.  
 46 A camera is roughly equivalent to a town council (*concelho*). The *concelho* is an administrative unit composed of a number of *freguesias*. A *freguesia* is a parish, roughly equivalent to a ward and is governed by a *junta da freguesia*. In Lisbon, in 1978, there were 54 *freguesias*.  
 47 Interview with 'Our Lady of Fatima' activist. December 1975. \*  
 48 Interview with PCP militant, April 1980. \*  
 49 Interview with 'Our Lady of Fatima' activist, December 1975.  
 Members of the MFA were not always enamoured with the PCP efforts; e.g. a representative of the MFA went to one of the COPS meetings and challenged its representativity. (Downes PhD dissertation, *op cit*, page 314)  
 50 Interview with Jorge Abegao, 5/5/84. \*  
 51 Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, Volume One, page 213.  
 52 Cliff, *Portugal at the Crossroads*.  
 53 Interview with TAP worker, 5/8/82. \*  
 54 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*  
 55 Downes PhD dissertation, *op cit*, page 313.  
 56 Interview (in Custodias prison) with Isabel do Carmo, 1/9/80. \*  
 57 For more information on the CRMP refer to Downes. *Resident Commissions and Urban Struggles*, pages 171-173 and Hammond *Building Popular Power*, pages 231-232. The quote is from Hammond.  
 58 Mailer, *Portugal: The Impossible Revolution?*, pages 286/7.  
 59 Interview with Jorge Abegao, 5/5/84. \*  
 60 Author's notes.

## The COMITE DE LUTA

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Practical Achievements
- 3 Organisation
- 4 What about the Workers?
- 5 Above Parties?
- 6 The part played by the PRP

## 1 Introduction

The Sebutal Comité de Luta (Committee of Struggle) was formed in reaction to the attempt by the 6th Provisional Government, on September 29, to close down all the radio stations including in particular Radio Renascença. This was a period of rapid radicalisation and polarisation. It may be recalled that at this moment a number of the Popular Assemblies were attempting to re-constitute themselves, placing less reliance on the leadership of the now hopelessly divided MFA. Organisations linking CTs and CMs emerged which did not call themselves popular assemblies. An example comes from Évora, where on October 14th thirty-four of them met in order to build links with the soldiers' commissions, mainly by supporting the SUV-organised demonstration. This was attended by 20-30,000 people, including some 1500 soldiers. (*Poder Popular* 23/10/75)

It was no accident that the Comité de Luta saw itself, not as a popular assembly, but a committee of struggle. Representatives from the barracks with others from CMs and CTs met on the night of September 30th and decided to formally launch the Comité. This was to become the most advanced example of a workers council to emerge in Portugal. (1) The assembly meetings became an alternative forum for democracy from below. The very fact of its existence changed local political complexion. It was a source of authority and power which rank and file workers could refer to.

Although not a member of any of the commissions Isabel Guerra was commonly regarded as being one of the most influential people within the Comite de Luta. She was involved in the *Bairros de Lato* (poor quarters) as a 'sort of social worker' and at that time was a member of the PRP.

"Many went to the Comite de Luta because they wanted to discuss who was going to take power. People were conditioned to discuss these things but not in a repressive way. People were more prepared to talk about lots of things." (2)

It was one of the few organisations which forced the Communist Party to become involved in an area where the revolutionary left set the pace.

"It created a space for discussion between far left and CP militants. People close to the PCP but without party membership were present so the party activists had to be there too." (3) The committee helped organise and co-ordinate a number of

practical actions concerning ordinary matters and also at the same time debated the national issues of the day. At one time it discussed whether it should organise an insurrection and decided not to do so, not because it could not, but because there was no existing national network of similar organisations. These examples and others are illustrated in the rest of this chapter.

Setubal had, in addition to the 3,000 workers at the Setenave shipyards, a number of factories in the newly established and more militant industries. By comparison with other Portuguese towns and cities in Setubal there was a high concentration of manual workers.

Downe's dissertation (4) is an in depth analysis of the residents' organisations and their co-ordinating bodies, including the Comite de Luta. The vitality of these organisations proved to be an important

contribution to the life of the Comite itself. This case study differs from the others in this thesis in that much more written information is available. One only has to look at the local bi-weekly paper *O Setubalense* (after it had been taken over by the workers) in order to find details. The affairs of the committee, and its proposed actions, often dominated the paper. I spent some time in Setubal, before the formation of the committee and during the time it was active. In comparison with others, this chapter contains less original source material. My main concern here is to extend the themes already introduced.

## 2 Practical Achievements

The first proper meeting was on October 6th, 1975. 500 people came. This was the first of eight meetings attended, normally, by between 300 and 500. Open assemblies ended after November 25th although some subsidiary commissions continued functioning for a while.

In a time of open class struggle the committee underlined the importance of those battles fought at the most basic economic level, whether for wages, housing conditions or food supply. Practical activity was one way to win mass support and to challenge those who promised reforms without activity from below.

The first major action was to organise a demonstration which eventually took place on 16th of October.

"This was important, the most important demonstration in

Setubal since that of the First of May, of soldiers and people. Lots of soldiers were ready to go on the demo but could not find it. They had left the barracks too late - but they made their own demonstration." (5)

Some soldiers missed it but many took part. Slogans included

"Reactionaries out of the barracks, Now!"

"Soldiers always, always on the side of the people!"

"For the dictatorship of the proletariat!"

"Out with the scum, power to those who work!"

Speakers at the final rally included soldiers from RASP, a military base in Oporto which was being occupied by its soldiers, and from the local barracks. There was a speaker from the local paper - *O Setubalense* - who told of the struggle of the workers against the owner who wanted to censor the news and fire those who sided with the popular movement. (6) The meeting of the 13th of October had already agreed to support any take-over of the paper by the workers. With moral support of the committee, *O Setubalense* workers sacked the proprietor and took over the paper on October 21st. (7) It was to play a prominent part in publicising the activities of the Comite de Luta.

The following day the regional agrarian reform centre in Alcacer do Sal (the nearest town south of Setubal) was destroyed by a bomb. Landworkers occupied another house in Alcacer do Sal and made it their new centre. Soldiers went to help. 'That day the soldiers gave guns away to citizens.' Participants in this occupation said that the support was co-ordinated by the Comite de Luta, which also sent civilian re-inforcements. The delegates from SAPEC and Setenave were not present

at the meeting of the 27th of October because they too had gone to help.

There were other instances of sending and organising aid for peasants in demonstrations outside the area.

"the Comite de Luta always did supportive things like the sending of telegrams and messages." (8)

For many the most impressive achievement was the distribution of agricultural products, which was undertaken by the Committee of Consumption, formed of elected delegates from the Comite. A toolmaker at the timber yard in Caparica described what they did

"It works like this. We write out the posters advertising what food will be on sale, and where. We borrow a lorry from one of the committee members and bring the food from the farms. The residents' committee collects food from here, and sells it round the houses. We sell all the goods at cost price. Soon we will have to vote on whether to charge a small amount extra for the cost of petrol.

A large cauliflower in the Setubal shops costs 18 escudos (about 30p). We are buying them from the farms and selling them at 7.5 escudos. You won't get a decent cabbage in the shops for less than 10 escudos. We buy and sell the cabbages for less than 3 escudos each. In the first two batches we bought 10,000 cabbages. We sold 8,000 through the residents' commissions and 2,000 at the shipyard and the old peoples' homes. Next week we'll be bringing more, much more. Very soon we will have to get another lorry." (9)

Downes summarises the activities connected with housing:

"(There was) development, in the housing work group, together with the Camara, and local construction worker organisations, of a programme to deal with the housing situation of the city:

- support for the completion of the existing SAAL projects, but without the completion of any more;
- occupation of all vacant housing, new or old;
- establishment of criteria to tie rent to income, taking into consideration the age of the building, its location and size, family size and other factors;
- rent to be paid to the committee of struggle, not the landlord;
- beginning of construction of infrastructure on a social housing project planned four years earlier, which had never

been begun; this work would be carried out by a construction company that was part of the committee of struggle, and had large numbers of workers facing imminent unemployment." (10)

Many of the proposed developments were never to be implemented due to their ambitious nature, practical problems and the lack of time. The Comite de Luta set up a specific commission to examine the rents. This gave militants the confidence to resurrect the campaign for a maximum monthly rent of 500 escudos per room. It co-ordinated and blessed the self activity of other groups. Many of the achievements attributed to it were actually implemented by people who used its name and authority. This happened when the soldiers from RIS defended the landworkers. In other parts of Portugal also, soldiers went to protect occupations by peasants and workers. But this was done in the name of organisations such as COPCON, which provided the legitimacy and took the credit.

### 3 Organisation

The first rule of the Comite was that there should be no discussion about organisation.

"From the beginning emphasis was given to the need to carry out work orientated to the concrete problems of the city and factories, enabling unity of the workers in practice and not the theoretical definition of the principles that would bring to the fore sectarian differences. Thus the structure which was maintained up to November the 25th consisted of weekly plenario of Workers' Commissions and Residents' commissions (unions and other popular organisations could intervene but had no right to vote), and there were mixed work groups for specific problems." (11)

This resulted in the committee concentrating upon immediate issues but created some organisational problems.



Meetings started at 9 or 9.30 p.m. and lasted until 1.00 am in the morning. At each session the members drew up the agenda for the next meeting. The attendance usually ranged from 300 to 500 people but there were smaller meetings and also joint meetings with, for instance the city council. Meetings were held on the 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th of October and the 3rd, 12th, 17th and 24th of November. In all, the Comite de Luta met 8 times up before November the 25th, after which it ceased, in effect, to exist. (12)

Its meetings were open to all. It was possible to bring up items which were not on the agenda.

"Although some people were delegates anyone could speak or vote at the meetings. Most people were workers. A big problem was that after the agenda was fixed for the meeting additional items always arose." (13)

The elected secretariat was composed of six delegates from CTs, four from CMs and five from the soldiers' commissions of the local barracks. The following workers' commissions were represented on the secretariat:

Setenave, shipyards	4000 workers
Entrepoto, a car assembly firm	731 workers
Secil, a cement firm	1000 workers
SAPEC, chemical products	949 workers
Conservas Unidas, fish canning factory	98 workers
Bronzes Cetobriga, a bronze-metal workshop	24 workers. (14)

Subsequently there were changes in representation. Entrepoto, dominated by the PCP, was always present. The residents' commissions initially

represented were Bairro do Liceu, 4 Caminhos, Matalhidos, and Sao Gabriel. Downes depicts these as being among the most active and militant. (15)

Although there were two barracks only one, that of the local infantry regiment RIS, was important and all the soldiers belonged to it.

"The soldiers sent five people. They were elected by the soldiers themselves. I cannot say how representative they were of the barracks because we weren't in the army but they were elected somehow. They had an internal organisation there. There were no officers amongst their delegates.

One cannot be sure whether the delegates from the CIs were always elected. It is true that most of the time they would go back to their commissions and report back. I think they did.

The secretariat needed to give a stronger lead but it was very difficult. There was so much information. We didn't have time. It was a problem that was never solved. When the soldiers spoke it was like God speaking. It was the soldiers' moment. They knew lots of things which nobody else knew. What was going on, in the army, in the government. It took up a lot of time...and left very little for discussing our own problems. And then there were the people from the co-operatives who wanted to present their own stories.... The secretariat couldn't control them.

I don't remember us ever resolving issues by voting. Most of the time there were proposals. And everybody agreed." (16)

In comparison with the activities of other co-ordinating organisations those of the Comite de Luta were well publicised. Total attendance at all the committee meetings was approximately 2500 out of a city population of 70,000. After the workers' take-over, *O Setubalense*, the main local paper, gave considerable coverage. For example the issue of 5th November published details on the first column of its front page, carried over to the whole of page three. About 300 people were said to have attended. The agenda was

Matters arising

Self Criticisms of the Comite de Luta

Presentation of plan by the housing (habitation) group

Proposal for the secretariat for new forms of organisation

Inquiry into 7th March.

The report continued to give details of the discussion plus all the resolutions that were put to the meeting. (*O Setubalense* 5/11/75, page 1 and 3). One of the results of the publicity and openness was that there was a considerable participation and public identification with the Comite de Luta.

It should be noted that in spite of the pledge that the committee would not spend time discussing organisation it found it had to do so when it recognised that there were problems of co-ordination and isolation. The previous issue of *O Setubalense* had carried a major report from the Comissao de Moradores da Quinta Alves da Silva. This report included a heading 'Comite de Luta - Solucao ideal?' and went on

"The Comite de Luta plays an important part in strengthening the struggle for Popular Power and building the alliance between the working class, landworkers and members of the military. It is the best solution possible, enabling mass mobilisation.

It is acknowledged that it has not been functioning properly. Because it was dominated by a few cliques ordinary people didn't participate.

But it is our duty to make the best of what we have.

We need to make it possible for the local people to know the days and times of the its meetings". (17)

The organisation was incredibly open, flexible and democratic but it was accused of being elitist.

"in and out of the Comite de Luta we created several groups to deal with habitation, workers' problems, country and city and education but these came later - close to November 25. The Comite de Luta was represented in each group. Proposals from

the groups were presented regarding rents, distribution of farm produce and education problems." (18)

Some of these groups carried on after the Comite de Luta itself ceased to meet in public. Paul Foot wrote in the *New Statesman* (19/12/75) about the Committee of Consumption.

"The Committee of Consumption was formed only a few weeks ago to deal with an urgent problem for the working people of Setubal. The price of food was becoming intolerable. At the same time, the farmworkers' co-operatives which had occupied the farms in the hinterland were finding it impossible to sell their harvest. The middle-men, the merchants who had distributed food from farms under private control, had boycotted the co-operatives. There was surplus food rotting in the countryside, and increasingly desperate hunger in the town. . . . .

The Committee of Consumption is not interested in isolated Utopia. It intends to spread its influence. At Marinha Grande, north of Lisbon, for instance, there is a farmers' co-operative which makes wine. It is cruelly boycotted by the merchants who deal only with private landlords and small peasant farmers. So in the next two weeks, 70,000 litres of wine will be brought to Setubal, and sold through the residents' commissions at cost price. As the Committee of Consumption grows, so it will charge mark-ups for transport and other expenses. But its principles will not change. They are, simply, that production meets the needs of the working people; that everyone, producers and consumers, benefits, but no one makes a profit." (19)

It has been suggested by Downes that the CMs and CTs and the Agricultural co-operatives should have had their own secretariats. He quotes a member of a resident's commission:

"problems of the factories were discussed with the *moradores*, and problems of the *moradores* were discussed with the workers; and there were other problems that didn't really have anything to do with the people there, but they spent hours arguing about them." (20)

After 25 November separate secretariats were in fact established for the CMs and CTs. One of the very strengths of the committee however was its ability to listen to a wide range of problems and to try to formulate solutions.

Despite the creation of working groups, some of which met almost every night, the accusation of elitism is echoed elsewhere, including the study by Downes. It should be remembered that there were a lot of organisations to mobilise, many of them heavily influenced by partisan bodies such as the PCP.

"We had at one time the attempt by the *camara*, to organise the residents' commissions in accordance with the *Freguesia* boundaries. By November the 25th the PCP had begun to criticise openly and to bolster alternative organisations such as the CTs of the Cintura de Setubal. This was very confusing. There was a lot of confusion among workers and tenants." (21)

The accusation of elitism is more than carping by disenchanted sectarians. In a revolutionary situation new structures may well not be able to provide the required openness and democracy. While the committee did bring about certain political changes in the city, given the limited time scale, it could not drastically affect the quality of lives of people in their *bairros* and factories. Indeed it differed from more traditional representative bodies such as local councils and parties, in that it emphasised that changes could ultimately only be brought about by the people themselves.

#### 4 What about the Workers?

The Comite de Luta is of outstanding interest because it managed at times to bridge economic and political issues. It aspired to break down the barriers of sectionalism and economics and to lead all sections of the working class in Setubal. It was broadly representative. But it is

necessary to examine closely its relationship with the CTs and the struggles in the workplaces.

It has already been pointed out that while the CTs were welcomed in the Popular Assemblies, in practice their voices were drowned by the noisier immediate problems of the populace. This happened even in the Setubal Comite de Luta:

"there was always a certain amount of tension between the CMs and the CTs. It was the presence of the workers' commissions that gave the Committee its strength, as all were aware at the time. But the CMs clearly had a dominant role in it, and when any group was missing from a meeting it was more likely to be a workers' commission than a CM." (22)

The relationship with the CTs was often discussed. At the meeting of November 12th

"there were about 100 people at its peak. This meeting had about one third the usual number of people. Everyone was upset that the committee was not going well and there were different explanations given from the Setenave person, it was pointed out that there were only two or three workers' commissions here." (23)

Many people regarded the point of production as primary, and saw workplace organisation as being more important than neighbourhood organisation.

Supporters were self-critical

"The committee was accused of not taking up the problems here. While action is taking place outside, the committee was waiting for the military, the MFA. But the Portuguese People must be active. They can't wait. People's ideology, unlike the parties', cannot keep things outside the committee. But most residents' commissions are not here." (24)

Despite setting up groups involved with building and shipping to study such problems many felt that solutions to economic problems did not lie

within the scope of the Comite de Luta:

'If Setenave, Sapec, or Compal was in trouble this was discussed and we tried to seek an economic solution. The problem was that economic problems such as building ships or automobiles, could not be solved by a committee.. The political situation did not give time to solve them. We know that at the time the political situation was too uncertain. Things were going to go one way or another. So political organisation was really important.. preparing for the future. This was a big topic perhaps. If we had not really cared about the economic problems I don't think the workers would have been there. But perhaps there was too much stress on the political side - The army and the soldiers were the most important people there and their stress was on what was political not economic." (25)

By far the most important struggle in this period was that of the construction workers. Their reasons may not have been sufficiently political for the young revolutionaries but the consequences of their actions had strong political overtones. Hammond claims that they by

"seeking wage increases and employment guarantees, had practically pulled off a *coup d'etat*". (26)

The Comite's most conspicuous failure to take up a workers' struggle was in respect of the building workers' strike. At the meeting on 12th of November

"two construction workers came to speak about Azevedo (*the Prime Minister*) and the construction workers' demo. They just told about it, didn't ask for anything from the committee. Neither did anyone in the room propose any action. In spite of the fact that the construction workers at that moment had barricaded the town square, and a government building in Setubal as well as barricading the constituent assembly. It just wasn't discussed." (27)

This neglect was extraordinary in view of the fact that workers from many building firms had worked closely with the Comite de Luta and CMs in the city. Admittedly the organisation of this sector was very uneven. The construction workers were often barely organised.

"It is difficult to generalise about the the building workers.

On the one hand the building unions were very active... But they changed directions easily and many times. The building workers' commissions and its people were very different from the people of Setenave and other enterprises. They had a very specific way of speaking, of political interpretation. They really only cared about their own business, their own enterprise.

I can recall two examples of this inwardness. Employers organised their workers, so both went on a demo against the *Camara* because they said the *Camara* was controlling the land. The unions never went.

The other instance was in Azeda where some houses were occupied. The man responsible for building told building workers that if the occupiers did not stop they the builders would not have any work, so they went there and evicted the occupants themselves. The people tried to explain their reasons but really the workers took a very aggressive position." (28)

Yet

"on 25th of November construction workers collected bulldozers and blocked the roads into Setubal so that the *panhas*, the army cars, could not go into the city. They made the first movement. They were very special people." (29)

## 5 Above Parties?

It was inevitable that the political issues of the day were discussed. After all the committee came together in response to the 6th Provisional Government offensive against the popular movement.

"I must emphasise that this was the political moment when everybody was in agreement. All the left parties agreed about the danger to the revolution. It was not only the organisation but also a convergence of spirit which made this one (the Comite de Luta) a little more than the others." (30)

Discussion at every meeting would usually be dominated by external events. 'External' is a misleading adjective because it conveys the idea



that they, in Setubal, could not affect the outcome of the revolution. What was going to happen to the revolution?. What could they do? These questions were asked repeatedly.

Granada's *World In Action* televised the meeting of October the 13th, which decided to back the occupation of *O Setubalense*. There was also a discussion about a residents' commission which had seized land illegally and then applied for and received government assistance for their self-help building scheme. The response to the announcement from the government that all revolutionary groups and commissions were to be disarmed was not on the planned agenda.

"Let's try to understand what they want to do with us. The same that was done in Chile and if they have not done it yet here it is because the majority of soldiers are people like us. If not we would have been killed already. What are they doing in Chile? They kill and torture people and this is what they will do to us when they take away the arms that are already in the hands of the people. What is our answer to these people going to be?" (31)

It is crucial to stress that the committee was more than a collection of political activists. It was a front united in common activities, despite political differences. It had a life like that of many other *apartidaria* organisations, which affected the ways that the parties intervened.

"Sometimes the slogans of the parties, the PRP included, did not coincide with the discussion. Sometimes the parties even spoke with a language which made people laugh. It was really difficult for a party to control the process, including the PRP. The PRP was in a better position because it always defended the autonomous organisation, and did not mind if the organisation went in directions other than it wished.

I think that what happened in Setubal was very, very interesting. I learnt a lot. I learnt that people can organise and discuss together even when they have political differences. I remember one political discussion, prior to a demonstration organised by the PCP, MES, UDP, LCI, PRP and MRPP. It was decided that the slogans would be by consensus.

They would never be voted on. They would talk until agreement was reached. And they did.

I remember that the greatest argument was over the UDP proposal of the slogan 'Against all imperialism' and the PCP didn't want this because for them there is only one imperialism, Yankee imperialism, of course. Eventually people settled for some sort of slogan against exterior aggressions. But what was curious was the capacity to agree. Curious because most of the time was spent on arguments like this. Often we would have 2 hours of talk about Russia, about the United States, about China.

In the Comite de Luta lengthy discussion around such items didn't happen. There was very little party political discussion. Even the MRPP was affected. It was very strange because they had a particular way of speaking and writing. When they spoke like this on the Comite de Luta all the people laughed. So they never spoke in that way again, they spoke in another way, as if they were humans. They learned how to speak. It was a process in which even the parties learned how to speak." (32)

Anxious not to split the unity the parties did not force a vote. But that carried the danger that issues could be fudged. Nobody having taken any particular stand, it was difficult to judge subsequently the validity of any opinion. Inevitably there were political differences in the debates. Militants, even though they may not have waved party flags, were associated with parties, and parties with particular standpoints.

In Setubal the proportion who voted for the Socialist and Communist parties was very high, to the detriment of the centre and conservative parties (the PPD and CDS). There were also many people influenced by the revolutionary left. Downes in his thesis sympathises with the popular power movement. The pity is that at no point does he name any parties of the far left or even try to analyse their contribution.

Although the Comite was much more than the creation of the

politically-conscious few it had been set up by a political vanguard. The Comite and party(ies) interacted with each other. Initiatives were derived from experiences of the recent past and depended upon those who had earned the right to lead in their own commissions.

Many weaknesses were associated with the role of the far left:

"The problem of the Comite de Luta and even the CTs was not whether the leadership reported back or not but that most of the time these activists were a militant minority. This weakness is very important to the understanding of the success of the November 25 offensive. The kind of discussion that took place in the Comite de Luta could not be held in the place of work. It was very political. It was the discussion of a minority - the intelligentsia within the workers' movement. Even on the CTs the delegates to the Comite de Luta were those who, although sincere and honest, were already open to the ideas of the Comite de Luta.

So the Comite's main weakness was that it did not correspond to the popular organisation in its bases. There were widely differing levels of political consciousness. The militant minority was very busy and it had no time to organise feedback. Time was very short, a year to accomplish so many things. The people from the slums (*bairros de lata*) never did like the Comite de Luta or the CM because they did not feel anything. There were no problems about 'homes' as they did not have any. They never thought of the Comite de Luta, as 'us'." (33)

## 6 The Part Played by The PRP

In 1975, towards the end of August, I asked some of the leading PRP militants how strong they and the far left were in Setubal. The attendance for the meetings, it must be suggested, are apocryphal.

"We had only one public rally in Setubal as our main concern is with workers. 10,000 people came to this meeting. The LUAR held a meeting of 5,000. After 25th April people were like

little children ...hungry for politics. The factory units have held many meetings, up to 500-700 came to the one at the bronze factory. 1000 people went to the one (industrial meeting) called by the Setubal PRP.

It is hard to tell how many units we have in the factories because we have one or two members in many different places, as well as sympathisers. We have 4 members in Cetobriga Bronzes and 6-7 building workers in Troia... We do not know how many members we have in the army - one soldier knows the members and he brings along the money from them members and other supporters.

We are selling only 200 papers now." (34)

A comrade from the shipyard told me his estimate of the number of party militants in Setenave

"PCP 150. UDP 50? PRP 15. MRPP 6. Socialist Party a small cell. MES is insignificant. PRP has a growing number of sympathisers, about 40. The PCP has stayed roughly the same size. We sell about 80 papers." (35)

The number of party militants in Setenave and the numbers who were prepared to attend meetings in Setubal are an indication that it was possible for revolutionaries to recruit members and that many non-members were attracted by the ideas of the far left. However these numbers also give some indication of the gap between the PRP comrades and those who were being attracted towards ideas of revolution. The fact was that outside the Communist Party there did not exist a party with a tradition of sustained mass work.

Many of those interviewed, and visitors, noticed the PRP influence. For example at the meeting of November 12th

"The PRP is in the leadership. It constituted the majority on the committee and a PRP member was chairing the meeting." (36)

"The predominant party influences were those of the PCP and the PRP. The PRP was in the majority, even on the workers' commissions. Some commissions were not of one colour. In some we had PCP in "PRP" commissions. Entre Poste was always

PCP." (37)

"The soldiers' commissions sent delegates to all meetings and were amongst the most active people there. Two members of the PRP were in the soldiers' commissions, but lots of others, including one Maoist, tended to be influenced by the PRP." (38)

Isabel Guerra described the role of the PRP in great detail.

"I was involved with the comrades from the beginning of the Committee. The initial idea was to have a tri-lateral organisation - with soldiers, workers and tenants.

The PRP was really important in this proposal, crucial. I think the intention to attack concrete problems was right. Obviously the PCP was important in Setubal and over-all had a greater base. But we had lots of people organised and lots of sympathisers and many of them were in organisations of co-ordination.

Sometimes the PRP did arrange caucuses, especially before important discussions, if there was time. These happened more frequently in the COPS than the Comite de Luta because we felt it was losing contact with the process. In the Comite de Luta they were more difficult to arrange because events were moving much more quickly and we had no time for discussion.

The idea of establishing a single organisation representing the three forces was proved correct. But it is easy to see now that the PRP made mistakes in the Comite de Luta. When we wanted to take up an issue we didn't always ensure that there had been agitation at the base. Perhaps we didn't have enough people to make all the work. We spent too much time organising and not enough communicating and for this we suffered the consequences . . .

Another important question was the connection between the economic struggle and the struggle for power. The PRP held the opinion that there was no room for economic power (*domain*) and this made it more difficult to establish good relations with workers in the factories. Yet most workers' leaders felt the need to be present at the Comite de Luta to discuss issues. The discussions were only of a small group of people and helped to widen the gap between the more advanced and the other workers." (39)

Some argued that the PRP's neglect of the workplace struggles over issues such as wages, conditions and workers' control was also attributable to organisational problems

"the PRP had much better connections with the CMs than with the factories." (40)

This issue has been covered elsewhere. The national leadership was more interested in maintaining its CRTSMs' project than backing the Comite de Luta. The CRTSMs had established a centre (sede) on a busy street in Setubal in what had been a modern shop. It served no useful function but it was not offered to the Comite de Luta. Its continuance was ordered by Lisbon because it was thought important to pretend the CRTSMs' movement was not finished.

The PRP was in favour of armed insurrection, and it is no surprise that the speaker quoted by Granada TV was one of its members. Other meetings, throughout the country, considered the same issue. But the PRP gave the discussion a particular dimension.

The PRP actually permitted a dangerous confusion between propaganda and preparation. 'Dangerous' because it allowed the other side to accuse the far left of planning a coup.

"There was much discussion about armed insurrection. The Comite de Luta was always talking about seizing power but did nothing to make this feasible. There was no practical preparation, no military organisation, no militia. There was no distribution of arms. Some small groups came and asked for arms but never in Setubal. It happened in Almada. An insurrection in Setubal would have required the arms of the barracks, not the PRP.

A related weakness was that the problems of the soldiers were not openly discussed in the meetings. The PRP was more interested in discussing these in a more conspiratorial manner." (41)

If one accepts that a party such as the PRP had an important influence it is possible to argue that the policies and mistakes of the parties - such as the separation of economic and political struggles and the

insurrectionary manoeuvres - did influence, for better or worse, the actions of the Comite de Luta, and therefore the struggle of the people in Setubal.

But in Setubal mistakes by the PRP did not necessarily become the policy of the Comite. PRP members, and others, were affected by the Comite itself. It is difficult to distinguish between the real influence of the left parties and the general ideas of the time. But the evidence is that the Comite served as a place for learning, for parties to learn as well as people, for the vanguard to learn as well as the base. It was clear that revolutionaries could not simply come along and 'make the connection' between vanguard and base. In Setubal it seems the vanguard had to listen to the base if it wanted the base to listen to it. Nevertheless if it were not for the comrades of the PRP, who were committed to the building of a 'tri-lateral' organisation, linking soldiers, workers and tenants, the Comite de Luta would not have emerged.

However important the role of the PRP they were not the only factor. The militancy and unity in Setubal must also be attributed to the social composition and the industrial geography of the Setubal area. There was a new and militant working class. There were also links with the landworkers of the Alentejo and a highly developed housing struggle. (It was this residents' movement which gave the PRP a toe-hold and a base. They also had a significant influence in the key barracks.) Unlike Lisbon and Porto there were no higher educational institutes and the proportion of radical professionals was small.

Whatever its problems and weaknesses, whatever the reason for the emergence of the Comite and however much one wishes to stress or deny the role of the PRP, the fact is that the Comite managed to give some indication of what was possible. Indeed one has to go back at least to the mid-thirties (Spain and possibly France) to find equivalent examples in Western Europe of a workers' council.



## Setubal Comite de Luta - References

- 1 Hammond in *Building Popular Power* writes on page 236  
"The Committee of Struggle was more successful than  
other efforts to link workers, neighbourhood  
activists, and soldiers, but the task remained  
difficult, and its effectiveness was ultimately  
limited."
- 2 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*
- 3 Interview with Francisco Queroz, December 1979. \*
- 4 Downe's PhD, *Community Organisation, Political Change and  
Urban Policy: Portugal 1974-1976*
- 5 Interview with Henrique Guerreiro, 1/5/84. \*
- 6 The author was there.
- 7 This discussion and subsequent events was shown in the *World  
in Action* programme.
- 8 Interview with Henrique Eurreiro, 1/5/84. \*
- 9 Paul Foot, *New Statesman*, 19/12/75.
- 10 Downes PhD dissertation, *op cit*, page 323.
- 11 *Ibid.* page 319, taken from Fatima Branca, "Setubal e o Poder  
Popular", March 1976. The reference is incomplete.
- 12 Downs, da Silva, Goncalves, Seabra *Os Moradores a Conquista  
da Cidade* gives the details.
- 13 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*
- 14 The composition of the committee is given in the chronology  
chapter of Downs, da Silva, Goncalves, Seabra *Os Moradores a  
Conquista da Cidade*. The size of the workforces comes from  
the same source, in an appendix.
- 15 Refer to Chapter 7 of the Downes PhD dissertation.
- 16 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*
- 17 *O Setubalense*, 3/11/75.
- 18 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*
- 19 Paul Foot: 'Report from Portugal', *New Statesman*, 19/12/75.
- 20 Member of the CM Santa Maria Sul, Downes PhD dissertation, *op  
cit*, page 471.
- 21 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*
- 22 Downes PhD dissertation, *op cit*, page 399.
- 23 Extracts from report Joan Kelly, a member of the IS in the  
USA. Joan Kelly and I went to the same meeting. I have quoted  
from the report she sent back to the United States.
- 24 *O Setubalense*, 3/11/75.
- 25 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*
- 26 Hammond, *Building Popular Power*, page 240.
- 27 Joan Kelly, *op cit*.
- 28 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 *World in Action* programme, produced by Granada TV,

- Manchester, UK, broadcast November 1975.
- 32 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Interview with PRP activist, Setubal, August 1975. \* This was incorporated in a report for the IS Central Committee.
- 35 Interview with Setenave worker, August 1975 who took the author around the shipyards. \* This was also included in the report for the IS Central Committee.
- 36 Joan Kelly, *op cit.*
- 37 Interview with Henrique Guerreiro, 1/5/84. \*
- 38 Interview with Francisco Queroz, 1/4/84. \*
- 39 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*
- 40 Interview with Francisco Queroz, 1/4/84. \*
- 41 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*

## CONCLUSIONS

### Part One

- 1 The Gutting of Popular Power
- 2 Reformism
- 3 The over-all part played by Workers Councils
- 4 Why were the Councils not Stronger?

### Part Two

- 1 The Themes
- 2 The Breadth of Representation
- 3 Workplaces and Muscle
- 4 The Overlap between executive and legislative
- 5 From Outside
- 6 The politics of the Revolutionary Left
- 7 End

## 1 The Gutting of Popular Power

Part One of these conclusions considers some of the more general points. Why did the popular power movement collapse? What was the role of reformism? What was the over-all part played by the workers' councils?

It has been argued that workers' councils usually emerge in revolutions. In Portugal this movement, by comparison, was fairly weak. We have to ask why. Organisational and political observations regarding the case studies will be left to Part Two of the conclusions. The distinction between the two sections is that the former is concerned with the macro and latter the micro level.

The collapse of resistance to the coup of November 25th cannot be entirely attributed to the actions of the PCP and the ineffectiveness of the far left. It is important to examine that section of the military which supported popular power.

Traditionally the military is the agent of the capitalist state, its principal organ of repression. The ideology, often accepted by the military, is that the armed forces are there to defend the State, of which they are part, and not particular sections of society. When the machinery and the power of the State cracks, as it sometimes does, the military may emerge from the disarray as the most coherent force.

The 'Movement of the Captains' was seen as protecting the new non-fascist state. Originally leaders of the MFA did not intend it to take up the reins of power. That the former ruling oligarchy of big industrialists and landowners was now weak and fragmented, and that there was no established reformist framework, meant that there was a power vacuum. It became increasingly clear to the MFA that abstention was not possible. A section of the military revolted against the new, predominantly civilian, regime. The junior officers of the MFA succeeded in neutralising the majority of the officer class on the grounds of 'saving the nation'. They were prepared to assume power, in the name of the people. The MFA was constantly but by no means continuously radicalised by the people that it professed to represent. This re-thinking had started in Africa by April 25th but the MFA was not outstandingly progressive. The discrediting of Caetano and Spínola and the lack of a credible reformist strategy from within helps explain the dominance of the MFA. The power vacuum also helps explain the ability of the workers' movement to attract and activate soldiers and officers.

The reaction of the officers and the soldiers had a profound influence on the population that it claimed to represent. It was so significant that it helped shape a new movement, that of Poder Popular. Most of the junior and middle ranking officers had middle class backgrounds. The original demands of the MFA - 'Democracy, Development and De-colonialisation' - were commensurate with this. Despite their backgrounds the officers of this group became far more politically aware, and as intermediaries and as a group the MFA heeded the demands of oppressed sections. (1)

Many of the officers were aware of the possibility of reaction in the form of an extreme right movement, ready to organise a coup and subsequent repression. The events of September 28th and March 11th were constantly cited, and exaggerated. This stress on the overthrow of fascism blurred the distinction between fascism and capitalism. Exaggeration of the fascist threat encouraged an apocalyptic view of the revolutionary process. Many, especially the newly converted military, feared that the vicious take-over in Chile two years before might be repeated in Portugal.

The movement for popular power loved to hate the fascists. This passion left them blind to the non-fascist enemy. Workers would have resisted and possibly defeated any conservative forces outside the MFA. The popular movement was looking for an external enemy, not one within the MFA, and not on the left of the political spectrum. It is true that the disarray of the ruling class could lead it to take desperate measures like the abortive coup attempts of September 1974 and March 1975. The fear of a repressive coup was further fuelled by the activities of the right in the summer of 1975.

In fact the force that stemmed the revolution was one faction of officers, turning against another. Carlos Fabiao, the Chief of Staff of the Army, stresses that at the time of November 25th Soares and others had rejected the idea of an overtly counter-revolutionary coup

"There were two coups prepared for that time. There was one which might be called from the left under the leadership of the Group of Nine and supported by the PS. There was another

group in the north of the country, from the right, under the leadership of Sa Carneiro and Pires Veloso. The American ambassador Carlucci supported the southern group because, unlike Kissinger, he believed that only a centre left government could stabilise the Portuguese political situation." (2)

The brilliant achievements of the struggle meant that many felt there was no need for political parties. Workers, residents and radicals within the military, would defend the revolution by themselves. There was obsessive interplay between workers' movement and army. The military origins of the Portuguese Revolution meant that the mass movement relied heavily upon sections of the armed forces. The military wanted short cuts which bypassed the main parties. Often the left saw the military as its short-cut. It did not build by learning from its own mistakes and experiences but operated in the shadow of the left officers' flirtation with popular power. The danger of the left's interest in the military was neglect of the class struggle itself. This is illustrated by its differing strategies towards the unions and industrial struggles. Strikes, actual and potential, were neglected.

Another form of neglect was the abandoning of the struggle in the electoral arena. (One of the unusual features of the MFA was its voluntary relinquishing of power.) Having allowed elections, a number of the leading MFA individuals advocated their boycott. This failed hopelessly.

The MFA represented itself both as being at the service of the 'oppressed classes' and, frequently, as standing above class, which obscured its own class origins, created the illusion of 'non-class'

organisation and fudged class contradictions. In Portugal the traditional military stance of disliking political parties took on a new dimension when officers, soldiers and sailors started to build an extra-parliamentary mass movement in opposition to the emerging bourgeois parties and the so-called "workers' parties".

It is common for there to be an anti-party current in a revolution. The role of party militants, especially the Maoists and the hard-line members of the PCP, at the residents' and workers' meetings, could be dogmatic, pedantic, unnecessary, and was often seen as a diversion from real problems. One observer recalls

"I remember people standing up and talking for two hours about the political situation at a meeting in a shanty town in Monsanto, until a woman stood up, told everyone to shut up. She had come to talk about the drains...too many (male) politicians preferred posing around and spouting to actually doing anything concrete. This was a constant feature of meetings and important factor in weakening, exasperating ordinary working class people in popular organisations" (3)

Workers, housewives and the far left did learn how to relate immediate issues to (P)olitics, but this process was far from consolidated.

Undoubtedly the movement was uneven and raw. Portugal's historical and cultural legacy meant that there was a significant anti-party legacy.

But *apartidarism* developed acutely because it dovetailed neatly with the military tradition of the MFA. Always being at the service of the movement and not siding with parties meant that it was difficult to comment on or even discern the variety of views and weaknesses which existed. At *Republica*, for example, when there was a difference in the workers' movement, the paper would refrain from issuing an editorial which took sides. On the extremely well organised demonstrations all the



slogans would be prepared before-hand. It was almost impossible to chant any other. The revolutionary left, other than Marxist-Leninist, shied away from selling papers. Party banners were hardly ever seen. There are instances of MRPP members being evicted from demonstrations because they wore their party badges.

COPCON, SUV and the Military Police were not workers' councils. They were not democratically elected forums. Yet when they came to the aid of workers, tenants, landworkers, etc, they acted in a similar way to other workers' councils in previous revolutions. A prominent sign on one Lisbon industrial estate gave the telephone number of the local COPCON unit and urged workers to telephone if they required help. Some members of the MRPP forged a letter from COPCON, giving them authority to occupy a house in Lisbon. When they did so no questions were asked. When workers occupied the lands they could rely on the army not acting against them. Otelo illustrated this nicely in a press interview. He told how fellow officers from the Council of Twenty (the MFA inner cabinet) came to him with a photograph of an occupied farm in which there appeared a rural worker shouldering a rifle in defence of the occupied farm. They said

"Have you seen this? It is impossible. You have to send troops, our troops, to get those people out of there."

Otelo replied

"No, no, if anyone goes and tries to take that away... I'll go there and defend the land with the workers" (4)

It has been argued, in the popular power section, and elsewhere, that the dependence on the MFA inhibited the development of generalised working class organisation, in particular that of workers' councils. The

MFA hindrance was not intentional.

The armed forces movement could not be as consistent, effective or directly rooted in the masses, as workers' and soldiers' councils. Usually the split of the army occurs late in a revolution and is a culmination of acute social and political crisis. The disaffected in the armed forces gravitate towards an already established alternative, knowing they cannot rely on the armed wing of the status quo.

The workers' movement was ambivalent about the role of the military. On the one hand it stressed its potentially reactionary nature and on the other the revolutionary allegiance of sections of officers and soldiers was over-emphasised. A rather vacuous alliance with the military was preferred to firm ties with independent organisations of the working class. The movement underestimated inherent flaws in this alliance, the centrist vacillations of 'so-called revolutionaries' in the military and their tendency to 'go over the heads of classes' while professing to act on their behalf.

The military popular-power alliance scorned the major parties and wholly underestimated the tenacity of reformist solutions propagated by the major political parties.

## 2 Reformism

Marx said that 'the prevailing ideas are the ideas of the ruling class'. He also argued that the pressure of the system inevitably generates struggle and that through this struggle a resistance to capitalist ideas develops. Over the past century the majority of working class people in Britain and in many other developed countries has supported reforms which combine acceptance of the basic tenets of the system with elements of protest against it. Reformist organisations promise to achieve miracles on behalf of the working class; from above. They depend upon discontent and are able to channel working class aspirations through national institutions such as parliament and trade unions.

The lack of a reformist tradition in Portugal allowed the left to grow. The left dismissed reformism as another mask of capitalism but under-estimated its ability to attract and absorb sections of the working class.

According to most of the left the only alternative to 'Forward to Socialism' was 'Back to Fascism' and this was a major weakness because it failed to prepare workers to resist the consolidation of bourgeois democracy. Although at the time of April 25th the parliamentary forces were not organised - the Socialist Party had only two hundred members - the idea of parliamentary democracy held a certain attraction for an electorate, the majority of which had never taken part in a democratic election.

The Marxist-Leninists actively tried to encourage the development of democratic fronts against a potential counter-revolution. They argued that, as bourgeois democracy was an essential stage in the progress towards socialism, it must be supported. This concept did not allow for those who wanted revolutionary democracy as an alternative, nor did it spell out how the gains of the revolution could be reversed by the consolidation of bourgeois democracy.

By far the most dramatic symptom of the under-estimation of reformism was reflected in the often repeated warning that the military coup in Chile, two years previously, might be repeated in Portugal.

Actually the neo-fascists were not real contenders for power. The Portuguese ruling class itself had suffered the inconvenience of a right-wing authoritarian regime. The machinations of those aligned with Spínola did not appeal to the propertied sector. Nor was the Chile example an inspiration to Business and the CIA, as the left liked to imagine. Since the coup of September 1973 the Chilean economy had faced continuing crises. The NATO powers preferred, now, the option of building a 'stable' bourgeois parliamentary system, if at all possible. Progressive sections of Portuguese capitalism wanted to join the EEC. The EEC demanded democratic credentials.

Reformist politicians posed as the champions of the interests of the workers. The workers lacked the experience and judgement to prove otherwise. The 'brilliant' achievements of the struggle did not mean that Portuguese workers had by-passed reformism or were permanently

immune from it. Although reformist consciousness - the ideas of the ruling class modified by the experience of exploitation and oppression - is not dependent on the actual winning of reforms the prospect of gain without pain can make reformism extremely popular. This study has tried to show that militants had not been schooled in the fight against reformists on the day to-day issues, in the workplaces, the unions and through the ballot boxes. The experience of militants was varied, uneven and contradictory. The movement was still young, people were picking and choosing their options. PCP militants in the workplaces could still support the OTs when their party did not. Others would have supported the PCP in workplace struggles and voted for the Socialist Party in the elections for the Provisional National Assembly. It must be recalled that the Socialist Party could appear very left-wing. In September 1975 Soares explained to *the Times* (23/9/75) that his programme 'was not meant to correct the most unjust aspects of capitalism but to destroy capitalism'. Although a large number of those active in the mass workers' movement in 1975 must have voted for the Socialist Party, many did not foresee the emergence of the watered-down variation which won the 1976 elections.

The Socialist Party attracted millions of ordinary people by appealing to socialism, freedom, personal liberty, votes, a parliamentary system and orderly management by the state of the economy. Furthermore the Socialist Party was strongly against the involvement of the military in politics. In retrospect, it is hardly surprising so many people turned to them after 48 years without democracy.

The left-wing aura of the Socialist Party should have been dispelled by its behaviour in the summer of 1975 when its verbally-strident anti-Communist campaign fanned the burning-down of many offices of the Communist Party and the revolutionary left in the North and Centre of the country. The Socialist Party did not actually lead and organise November 25th. Any serious attempt to reverse the gains of the mass movement had to involve an attack on the best organised sections and the radical officers. The willingness of the Socialist Party to take on this task was circumscribed only by the lack of appropriate forces at its disposal. But it succeeded in giving significant political encouragement to reaction. (5)

The behaviour of both the Socialist Party and the PCP was necessarily different in some respects from the general pattern of behaviour of similar parties in Western Europe. Despite using a similar vocabulary, of 'democracy and socialism', there was a sharp distinction between them at the time. Unlike the Socialist Party, and its communist counterparts in Europe, the PCP was not pre-occupied with the parliamentary road to socialism. (6) It sought to consolidate its power, making maximum use of its connections within the Armed Forces and the existing State structure. Had it been sufficiently confident of its popular support it may even have been prepared to organise a coup d'etat like the one in Prague in 1948. That had been a classic instance, one of which Alvaro Cunhal was very aware, of a communist party coming to power after a period of coalition government. Just as the Socialist Party presented a variety of faces so did the PCP, but their manner of doing so was different. The Socialist Party was unlike the PCP in that it did not

have control of a party machine which could implement dramatic changes of tack. Sometimes this resulted in contradictions such as the PCP abandoning the phrase 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' despite its lack of endearment with Euro-Communism and the 'parliamentary road'. The PCP tried to keep one foot in the MFA and the State Machine, another in the workers' movement and, sometimes to try to jam both feet in the door of bourgeois democracy. The result was some astonishing switching of foot-positions.

It is necessary to stress the reciprocity of the roles of the Socialist and Communist parties. They did so themselves - at times. In most of the period leading up to the late summer of 1975, the PCP played the central role of dampening down strikes and waging the battle for production. In consequence the Socialist Party was able to make the most of its social-democratic, rather than Stalinist, stance and to give a revolutionary gloss to its activities. There are different kinds of reform (in Britain the reformism of the Labour Party is different from that of the Trade Unions). Nevertheless the PS and the PCP both emphasised the need for centralised authority and organisation. Both promised to deliver reforms, from above, on behalf of the people.

Although during its most radical phase the Socialist Party might have called itself revolutionary it in general identified with a reformist ideology. The PCP was less happy professing a belief in 'reformism'. However despite their differences and contradictions they both served to reclothe Portuguese capitalism with a democratic cloak.

### 3 The Overall Part played by Workers' Councils

Certainly in Portugal, as in other industrial countries where the masses have attempted to break with the past, workplace organisations mushroomed, not only in the factories but also in barracks and on the land. A variety of co-ordinating, higher-level bodies developed. Those that have been examined in this thesis were successful, in general, in attracting non-aligned workers.

Apart from fermenting alternative ideas of direct democracy the councils had some national impact.

The *Inter-Empresas* demonstration of February 7th placed on the map organisations of workers' committees, and a section of the revolutionary left. It challenged the cosy relationship between the PCP and MFA exposing the PCP as being 'not on the side of the class'. It showed the rest of Portugal that leading workplace organisations in the Lisbon Industrial belt were autonomous and organised, not mere lackeys of the PCP. This was the first demonstration where, contrary to orders from above, rank-and-file soldiers openly fraternised with the working class.

The CRTSMs were notorious. They promoted the idea that armed soldiers and sailors should be subordinate to an organisation outside both the MFA and any elected parliament. Members of the armed forces participated



openly, in uniform, and illegally, in conferences and meetings which suggested an alternative form of organisation. In reply the PCP came up with the CDRs. The CRTSMs indirectly piloted the concept of Popular Power through the MFA even though the Povo/MFA pact was designed in part to draw the sting from the CRTSM's proposal.

The Povo/MFA pact, comprising the much publicised idea of Popular Assemblies, was important because under its broad umbrella the PCP and the revolutionary left were momentarily united. This led to the walkout of the Socialist Party and PPD from the 5th Provisional Government, the first and only time these parties were not part of any coalition. Some of the Popular Assemblies concentrated on parochial issues and became radical extensions of local government. Those which, like the CRTSMs, set themselves up as a direct alternative to bourgeois democracy, never really established themselves. Nevertheless the idea was important to the tens of thousands of people who participated.

The Comité de Luta in Setubal became the intra-city organisation which united and led the barracks, CTs and CMs. It was one of the few organisations in which the far left were most influential and in which the PCP participated. It became both an organising centre and a political forum, one that was considered in other areas. The Setubal Comité de Luta is an example of a developed workers' council, probably the strongest to emerge in Western Europe since the Second World War. If called upon it might have been able to raise an insurrection in the environs of Setubal.

Viewing the achievements in isolation, the list appears creditable. The organisations differed widely but all promoted the idea that in order to defend the revolution it was necessary to have a network of popular councils, based principally in the barracks and the workplaces.

Were they an alternative form of power? It has already been argued that they contributed to the process of change. But one of the sharpest recollections I have of the Lumiar Popular Assembly is of the silence that followed the question 'Who has the power?'. Eventually the answer came, 'Why, we do! - the Popular Assemblies!', but the length of the silence said more than the answer.

Of course attitudes could shift. The sharpest, and cruellest, test of power was that of November 25th.

I have already mentioned the swearing of their everlasting allegiance to the people by the new recruits at RALIS. This ceremony was supervised by an officer-member of MES and organised in conjunction with the local Popular Assembly. It took place on November 23rd. Within three days the vows of resistance were to be repudiated.

Most of the Popular Assemblies were ineffective, as was demonstrated by their not organising any resistance to November 25th. One at Almada was involved in drawn-out arguments with the barracks as to whether arms should be handed over to local workers. Their final decision came too late. The barracks had succumbed to the commandos.

The Committee of Struggle itself gives some idea of what local resistance was possible. It set up a clandestine radio which operated for a few days. The town hall had been occupied. From there

"we tried to contact all the organisations including the unions and cultural organisations. We called a rally outside the barracks. All the time we were connected with the principal barracks in Lisbon and other cities. The problem of 25th of November was that neither the unions nor the CTs controlled by the PCP were interested in what was going on - they said so - they did not mobilise. Many people were influenced by them. In the regiment the soldiers took arms from a captain and controlled the situation as long as they could. After a certain time they couldn't do so any longer. . .

What 25th of November did show was that the Committee of Struggle could function in time of crisis. But the problem was much more complex. Even today I would like to know what actually happened then. What was clear even then was that the PCP did sabotage the movement. We called the sindicatos and they said 'No, nothing is going on'. In the big enterprises, like Setenave, the CT which was PCP controlled, said 'No we haven't heard anything, everything is all right.'" (7)

The secretariat of the Committee of Struggle continued to meet but never called another full meeting.

Popular Organisations were willing to mobilise but November 25th killed off the embryonic council movement. Ironically, an effective network of councils could have reversed the consequences of November 25th.

An assessment of the contribution of the workers' councils movement in Portugal must judge whether there were other examples and whether they should have have been included as case studies.

The Cintura Industrial de Lisboa (CIL- the network of workers' commissions in the industrial belt of Lisbon) was, immediately prior to November 1975, an important and powerful organisation, at least

comparable with those selected in this study. It was the main organisation behind the truly gigantic demonstration of November 16th. It called a partially successful general strike in the Lisbon region on November 24th and it could certainly have consolidated the strikes and called for occupations in response to the 25th.

It, the CIL, might possibly have been included but it did not fulfil the stated criteria for selecting the case studies.

These were the criteria:

- a) were workplaces directly represented?
- b) did the revolutionary left play an important role?
- c) did the organisation see itself potentially as part of a radically alternative form of power?

CIL did not see itself as an alternative power. Its sought to defend the gains against the sixth Provisional Government. But it was not just a mouthpiece for the Communist Party. The PCP militants within it were to the left of the Party and did not always 'follow the line'. The PRP and the UDP saw no point in participating in 'a PCP front', but they were mistaken.

For the purposes of this study the second criterion - the influence of the revolutionary left - was used to determine which examples to use but, under examination another question arose, 'Was the organisation independent of political parties?'. In the end the worker-militants active in the CIL were unable to stand against PCP orders to put up no

resistance on November 25th.

Another example, already described in some detail, could have been SUV. It was discounted as a case study because it was an organisation for rank-and-file soldiers only. SUV militants did, however, make a great point of going out and speaking in workplaces and trying to build class links. It was certainly a force to be reckoned with.

The Inter-Empresas, the CRTSMs, the Popular Assemblies, the Comité de Luta, CIL and SUV, in combination, played a decisive part in the events of 1974 and 1975. The role of independent workers' organisations has been greatly underestimated by many, if not the majority of historians and commentators. Nevertheless, even those who consider such groups to be of prime importance have to admit that the council movement in Portugal was still somewhat fragile and tenuous.

#### 4 Why were the Councils not Stronger?

The background chapter and other studies have shown that there was a mass movement in Portugal that spread through many sections of the working class. The health of any council type organisation must depend on its relation to the components at the base. Blame for the failure of the 'prototype soviets' has often been laid at the door of party political influences. These influences were important but it is clear that failure was related to developments outside the councils but within the working class. February 7th was an important demonstration but it

was also a turning point in Lisbon. The PCP had won effective control of the workers' organisation from within. The CRTSMs failed to consolidate an idea in the existing factory committees. The Popular Assemblies offered little inspiration with regard to day-to-day problems inside the factories and failed to develop a national strategy that could counter a bourgeoisie which was regrouping behind the Group of Nine and the Socialist Party.

A consideration beyond the scope of this study could be whether one should even be looking for workers' council development. Perhaps, starting with the Paris Commune, revolutionaries have always confused potential with actual strength. It is difficult to compare the strength or weaknesses of Portuguese examples with that of their counterparts in other times and countries. 'History depends upon evidence' - A problem facing all historians is that the evidence is destroyed, particularly by the victors in this kind of struggle.

A characteristic of the popular power movement in Portugal was its dispersal so that it eschewed centralised national structures. There may be a parallel between 'apartidarism' in Portugal and the influence of anarcho-syndicalism in Republican Spain 1936. In Spain most of the towns and villages had workers' councils operating under various names but there was no centralised network to lead them. (8) (Portugal too had a long standing anarcho-sindicalist current although it was not as developed as its Spanish counter-part.) Councils in Portugal did not emerge as rapidly as they did, for example in Budapest in 1956, as a centralised political force. In Hungary centralisation was a response to

foreign invasion. In Portugal the achievements in the factories, towns and on the land was far more developed and sophisticated than in Hungary. But the Hungarian example demonstrates that the failure of a councils movement cannot be only explained by examining its achievements at the this level.

As has been shown, the military origins of the Portuguese Revolution meant that the mass movement relied heavily on sections of the armed forces instead of building national self-reliant working class organisations. The main reason that many workers did not organise their own autonomous network of councils is that as a class they did not see the need to set them up as the alternative to other forces, especially as these forces were capable of paying lip-service to ideas of workers' power. Even the monarchist party talked about 'soviets under the monarchy'.

The language of the time was extremely political. It contrasts interestingly with the use of political language in Poland during the height of Solidarity. In that case, the Communist Party was disowned and even the language of Socialism and Marxism was so corrupted by the ruling class that the workers' movement had to struggle to find other words to express its aspirations.

The adoption of political concepts and the rhetoric of Marxism did not mean that everybody automatically aligned themselves with the political parties and Politics with a capital P. Indeed, despite the high turnout at the polls, the disdain for parties manifested itself by the support

for the popular power movement. Many militants changed their political allegiance in the 1974/5 period.

But the seductive qualities of reformist politics must not be under-estimated. In many other situations of dramatic upheaval reformist parties have appeared to have far less to offer. As these parties had not previously been a major force in Portugal sections of the population were prepared to give them the chance to prove themselves. In other situations Workers' Councils have bound workers together as a class. They (and workers' and soldiers' councils, workers' and peasant' councils, etc) have been created in widely different conditions. Their central role in a revolution is the generalisation of the struggle of the workers. Councils were built in Turin 1920 in response to the employers' offensive, in Hungary in 1956 against the Russian threat. In Portugal the workers' movement did not have a clear national perspective, particularly with regard to questions such as how Socialism could be achieved and where the power lay. There was wide-spread scepticism about the major so-called "workers' parties" but many somehow thought that workers' power could only be brought about in conjunction with either the Socialist Party or the PCP.

Workers' councils had to compete with alternatives. Large sections of the working class still relied heavily on the armed forces or the alluring reformist promises by the parties. Events in Portugal never resulted in a massive upsurge of workers' councils. The coup attempts by reaction were repelled without their aid. But it would be foolish to suggest that, because they were not very developed, they could not have



Conclusion Part One/(4): Why were the Councils not Stronger?

been grown rapidly. Like SUV, the Setubal Comite de Luta mushroomed in a matter of days. (9)

## CONCLUSIONS - PART TWO

### 1 The Themes

In the Introduction, section three, it was stated that the following would be re-examined in the light of the case studies:

- i) The Central importance of the councils
- ii) Their breadth of representation
- iii) Their roots in the workplaces and ability to implement decisions
- iv) The overlap between executive and legislative.

Section five raised two more factors

- v) Could they be built from outside
- vi) The role of 'the' revolutionary Party.

The over-all importance of the councils has been dealt with in Part One of this conclusion. Part Two is at micro-level, dealing with specifics. While for purposes of classification and presentation a division has been made such a division is necessarily artificial, especially in revolutionary periods. (The Japanese have learnt not to build rigid dividing walls in earthquake zones.) SUV was founded by only a handful of people, almost by chance, and yet within weeks it had shifted into the national battle lines.

## 2 The Breadth of Representation

In order to become a significant force workers' councils had to mobilise a large number of people drawn from the most oppressed sections of society. Democratic organisational forms were essential. The Popular Assemblies provide a range of examples. The ones which assembled infrequently cannot be called popular assemblies, let alone potential workers' councils.

All forms of organisation were subject to extraordinary pressure from outside events and from internal tensions. Thus meetings were subject to interruptions and they were frequently called at short notice with insufficient publicity. The common response to any new crisis was to call yet another meeting. But the need to meet frequently did not compensate for a lack of willingness to specialise and delegate. If an organisation held large meetings but was unable to organise and delegate responsibility between meetings it was likely to be considerably weakened. Conversely there are examples, such as the 'Our Lady of Fatima' assembly, where the sub-groups were set up but did not report back and the over-all organisation died. The more developed organisations usually had some sort of meeting point for all people, plus an executive, and working sub-groups.

Those Popular Assemblies which planned from the outset to meet

infrequently usually saw themselves as extensions of the local council. Leaders were accused of belonging to a *cupula*, a clique, and commonly of being 'lackeys of the Communist Party'. The insult - '*cupula*' - was not confined to the PCP; indeed they tarred the CRTSMs with the same brush; they were said to be controlled by the PRP. But there was an important difference. The CRTSMs strove to be open. It invited other parties to send delegates and anybody could speak at its inaugural conference. The problem was that the other parties saw the CRTSMs as being a PRP front and did not send delegates. Some of the smaller parties such as the Trotskyist PRT sent observers. There is evidence that the CRTSMs did appeal to rank and file militants from the PCP but this was not enough to overcome the '*cupula*' smear. The CRTSMs, ostensibly democratic, did not actually represent a range of views and was dominated by the politics of the PRP.

The *cupula* accusation was also levied against the organisers of the Pontinha Popular Assembly - which consisted mainly of officers involved in MES. These different instances highlight general questions concerning sovereignty - were the organisations democratic, and were they independent? For a period the Inter-Empresas managed to attract a wide range of militants who were not Marxist-Leninists. Although the PRP leadership clearly addressed the issue of sovereignty in practice it was inconsequential because of it failed to involve others.

Trotsky said, in respect of the 1905 Soviet, that friction between different political parties and the attempt to establish the broadest possible representative base 'rendered the creation of non-party

organisation absolutely essential'. (10)

The same theme is presented, in a manifesto to the first world Congress of the Third International, convened in Moscow in 1919.

"In those countries where the toiling masses live a conscious life. Soviets of Worker, Soldier and Peasant deputies are now being built and will continue to be built. To strengthen the Soviets, to raise their authority, to counterpose them to the State apparatus of the bourgeoisie - this is today the most important task of the class conscious and honest workers of all countries." (11)

Only the broadest possible participation could ensure that an organisation became autonomous. This does not necessarily stop it identifying with particular views expressed by parties but the majority of those participating had to be convinced. In Portugal the popular organisations tried to ensure a high level of debate and democracy.

### 3 Workplaces and Muscle

It has been established that, as forums, the councils involved a wide cross-section of people. They were popular but there seems to have been a comparative lack of direct involvement of workplaces, which was significant.

The Inter-Empresas was the only network directly based on workplaces. Workers reported back from and brought issues to it. Many of its concerns were workplace issues - the role of the multi-nationals, factory closures, union elections. The demonstration of February 7th was called in response to the sackings that were taking place.

While the CRTs purported to be based on workplaces the evidence is that they were less deeply entrenched. This is not to say that participants from factories and barracks did not try to report back. But they found it harder in the factory to get issues taken up. These concerns, such as armed militias, and the 'political power', were somewhat different from those of the Inter-Empresas.

Though formally Popular Assemblies seemed to differ little from Soviets insofar as the Povo/MFA pact conceived assemblies as being comprised of delegates from factories and army units, in practice the residents' commissions and other non-workplace representation dominated the composition. Even where workplaces were well represented there is still little evidence of councils using their industrial muscle. Many of the assemblies were without significant representation from workplaces.

Soviets and workers' councils have usually emerged from workers' organisation in factories. They may have grown from an apparently insignificant issue (the Moscow print dispute, which helped give rise to the St Petersburg Soviet in 1905, arose from the use of semi-colons in type-setting) but they were essentially part of the workers' struggle at the point of production. Such development occurred in the Inter-Empresas. From Setubal there are examples of factory workers helping land workers in the occupations. But there is little evidence that the Popular Assemblies and the CRTSMs had such origins. Even in Setubal it was considered that the committee ignored the building workers' strike.

Activists identified in general with the class struggle but argued that, for all sections of the working class to win, it was necessary to set up an alternative power network. This was understood by the building workers in Setubal when, after November 25th, they approached the Comité de Luta. But a failure to connect meant that little was achieved. workplaces were not mobilised and above all, industrial strikes were not used as a weapon.

It may have been difficult to galvanise the workplace movement for external reasons. The working class had already won a number of victories. Wages had risen, bosses had been sacked. Now these gains had to be paid for. The economy was racked by unemployment, the return of refugees from the colonies, lack of capital, shortages and inflation. The experience of workers' controlling their own workplaces is not always inspiring. Those who promised to stabilise and manage the economy and to integrate Portugal into Europe were making some headway.

These things did not mean that the workplaces could not be mobilised, only that it was harder. The CIL organised brief stoppages in factories on two occasions in the run-up to November 25th. The building workers' strike in November (with a little help from rank and file soldiers) nearly brought down the 6th Provisional Government. If it had been linked with other forces it may have done that and more. Or the relating and the forging of links could have led to more and possibly decisive industrial resistance to November 25th.

#### 4 The overlap between executive and legislative

One of the features of the Paris Commune and the Soviets was the overlap of executive and legislative roles. The Paris Commune had no standing army. It organised its own militia drawn from residents in the quarters. Its officials were paid the same wages as working people. In Portugal there were many attempts to break-down the executive/legislative division. Some ignored so-called legal courts and set up Popular Tribunals. The Popular Assemblies and the Setubal Comité de Luta were attempts to create unifying forums where all aspects of struggle could be discussed.

A typical feature of reformism is the division of functions, such as the division between economics and politics and that between workers, workplaces and trade unions and trade union bureaucrats. Marxists have long recognised that capitalist society creates divisions which need to be abolished. The famous slogan in Petrograd in 1905 was 'an 8 hour day and a gun' illustrates the inter-relating of economic and political demands. Another example is the slogan of the 1917 Russian Revolution, 'Land, Peace and Bread'. These slogans attempted to include all those concerned with particular issues. Nancy Bermeo carried out a survey based specifically on the militant Portel region of the Alentejo. Of 180 landworkers who had taken part in the land occupations, 51.2% believed that their main reasons were economic. They either wanted a job or hoped to earn more money. (12)



The Portuguese extreme left was not always successful in relating to and involving people who were less politically conscious and less militant than itself.

Those militants from the Inter-Empresas who were active in the unions were accused of sabotage. Because the Inter-Empresas purported to 'have the character of unions' there was a lack of clear differentiation and resulting confusion. In spite of debates and discussion it never developed a strategy for fighting within or for the unions which the majority of workers supported.

It has been suggested that CRTSMs went as far as making a virtue of not concerning itself with 'bread and butter' demands. It stressed instead that its prime objective was the taking of power, and setting up units committed to these aims inside the workplaces. It did not recognise the over-all authority of the CTs or the role of the CTs in the political scene. But the CTs had led the battle to rid firms of fascists, 'illegal' strikes, and struggles against the unions. Whatever its faults the Inter-Empresas did not attempt to undermine the CTs.

A number of Popular Assemblies did concentrate upon 'parish pump' issues where others were more overtly political. But all failed significantly to take up workplace issues. Lack of workplace representation, a symptom of this failure, made the task of relating the different spheres more difficult.

Despite weaknesses, the Setubal Comité de Luta provides the best example of one group which combined both economic and political issues. It is no coincidence that it attracted militants from the PCP and the Socialist Party. It was the outstanding example of an organisation led by the extreme left and which the PCP felt compelled to take part in.

## 5 From Outside

Questions arise as to whether attempting to build councils from outside, from above, is a mistake.

Three phases of the Inter-Empresas can be identified. The first was the calling of informal meetings directly as a product of the strikes and occupations after April 25th. These were called by the workers themselves and were local initiatives. However it appears the guiding force was a group of ex-PCP militants active in a handful of Maoist grouplets. They weren't the only ones with political affiliations, but they appear to have had a determining influence. At this stage there was little formal organisation.

During the second phase of activity, leading up to February 7th, the Inter-Empresas created a more structured organisation. The Maoists had themselves become more organised, (the UDP had been launched), and were still heavily involved, much to the consternation of many of the non-maoists. In its third phase, after February 7th, it turned more inward and declined rapidly. This has been attributed by many to the

sectarianism of the UDP faction. This was a factor but there were others such as the PCP changing its attitude to workers' commissions after it had resolved the struggle for the hegemony of the Intersindical.

The Inter-Empresas can be said to have developed from below. This was not the case with the CRTSMs. Although, following the March 11th coup attempt, militants from the PCP and PRP may have got together and decided that it would be good to set up a political/military council, the real moving spirit behind the CRTSMs was the PRP. Here was an attempt to build from above. A member of the CRTSMs executive said 'It was an idea from the head of Carlos Antunes'.

The legacy of the Popular Assemblies is mixed. Undoubtedly most were built as a result of previous activities and local mobilisation. But their main stimulus was the Povo/MFA pact. In other words they were a conception from above. They did not emerge from the activity of workers. Interestingly the second phase, the renewal of the assemblies, occurred precisely when that leadership collapsed.

The need to organise against the new, more reactionary, 6th Provisional Government, particularly in defence against the attacks on Radio Renascenca, also gave rise to the Setubal Comite de Luta. It had learnt from the failure of COPS and also that the formal involvement of the left parties was important.

Looking back on these examples it is clear that the role of political organisation was important, sometimes negative and sometimes positive.

It is not easy to find parties from other revolutionary situations that have been committed to autonomous working-class councils, or actually launching workers' councils. An example is to be found, however, in 1917. Mensheviks founded the Soviet of Petrograd. (Mensheviks were also closely connected with the 1905 Soviet.) The Mensheviks and Bolsheviks had an advantage of having not having a well entrenched opposition like the Portuguese Communist Party. In Chile the left of the Socialist Party played a leading role in the 'cordones', and in establishing the Coordinating Committee of Cordones. (13) Closer to home the Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalists were important in the thirties. But regardless of the origins of all such councils the vital factor was the activity of the working class.

The influence of *apartidarism* positively encouraged the building of co-ordinating organisations because it firmly advocated the need for unifying non-party organisations. But equally it encouraged 'anti-partyism'. Its call for unity concealed problems. Fierce polemics were not only inevitable but necessary. Various positions needed to be taken up and platforms tested. Downplaying party affiliations led to a decrease in accountability. The PRP was able to score superficial points in the Inter-Empresas by condemning sectarianism but unless proposals transcend inward divisions, condemnation of the sectarianism itself becomes sectarian. Developed strategies on issues such as the relationship with the unions, the PCP, the CT's, wage demands and strikes, were singularly lacking in the PRP and MES.

To summarise, councils do not necessarily arise spontaneously. They can

be created from outside and above but they are doomed to failure unless they relate to, generate and unite the activities of the working class.

## 6 The Politics of the Revolutionary Left

The revolutionary movement was a minority movement, although a very strong and active one. The role of the far left in general has often been underestimated. Despite their meagre past these parties did influence events. At times the atmosphere was immensely conducive to revolutionary ideas. MES played a crucial role in setting up the Intersindical before it was swamped by the PCP. Maoist groups led the Lisnave strike in September 1974 against the Labour Relations Law. Supporters of the UDP, and to a lesser degree, those of the PRP, built the Inter-Empresas and organised the demonstration of February 7th. Members of the far left, in particular MES, created many of the Popular Assemblies. The LCI had a particular responsibility for starting SUV. The far left, especially the PRP, played an important part in building the Setubal Comité de Luta.

In the introduction to this thesis three dimensions in the attitude of parties towards workers' councils were suggested. Within the case studies one can discern these three positions.

The first was anti-party and numerous instances have been cited. It has been argued that *apartidarism* fitted in very much with the ideology of

popular power. It matched exactly the feelings of many left-wing officers.

The second approach, that which stresses the primary importance of party organisation, was obvious to those who identified with the first position. Many participants in the various case studies argued that the major problem of the revolution was that the role played by political parties was negative *partidarism*. They accused those members of the parties and sects of wanting to absorb the Inter-Empresas, etc, into their party organisations.

Those who took part in what became the coalition of Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries, which emerged by the beginning of 1976 as the PCP(R), had a very particular idea of how to amalgamate differing sectors. This was as an attempt to build an anti-fascist 'democratic front', the UDP. Despite its breadth of intentions this front could not integrate smoothly with supporters of the PCP. Ultimately the Marxist-Leninists wanted the Inter-Empresas to become a wing of the UDP and the UDP to become a section of the 'Party'. Thus meant that in spite of a 'stages' theory of revolution, there was no clear differentiation between party and class organisation.

Workers' Councils, in workplaces and local areas, create an opportunity for workplace activists and revolutionary socialists to combine their separate activities. Those who were non-aligned could be won over by convincing, not manipulating, them. Bermeo, writing about those who took over the lands, makes the point:

"Inspiration and manipulation are very different. The participants were inspired by the actions of other workers in other countries, and they were certainly helped by the assistance or neutrality of exterior forces, but they were not coerced or even "tutored" by outsiders." (14)

It is not sufficient to argue that what was needed was a revolutionary party - many Portuguese comrades were members of what they called 'revolutionary' parties. A Bolshevik party could not be built by proclaiming it. Nor could it be set up by assimilating the mass organisations of class struggle. This narrowness could only express failure in terms of individuals, leadership and mistakes.

Which brings us to the third position. If the first position stressed the class and the second the party, then the third emphasised both party and class but above all the interaction between them. Inter-relationship requires a clear differentiation between the two types of organisation. A party is a voluntary organisation consisting of like-minded people who are a minority except in revolutionary moments. Such a party should provide unity, direction and leadership to working class struggles to enable the class to establish its domination. Working class based organisations such as workers' councils, should be open to all regardless of political affiliations and differences of opinion. The real test of the party's operation in the class is its ability to relate the general to the specific and the specific to the general. Possibility of inter-relationship has to be located in a broader context. Gramsci took this up in his *Prison Notebooks*

"One can construct in specific practice a theory which, by co-inciding and identifying itself with the decisive elements of the practice itself, can accelerate the historical process which is going on, rendering the practice more homogeneous,

more cohesive, more efficient in all its elements, and thus, in other words, developing its potential to the maximum." (15)

Such clarity of distinction and emphasis on inter-action was not developed to any great extent by the political left in Portugal. The Maoists were hampered for the reasons already explained. They were committed to a 'stages' theory of revolution and had no direct strategy for preparing for workers' power.

The PRP and MES were committed to both building a party and autonomous organisation but they did not emphasise the distinction between themselves and the organisations of the class. At the founding conference of the CRTSMs the PRP said it was prepared to dissolve itself and become part of the CRTSMs. And yet the PRP was prepared to organise the insurrection on behalf of the class and assumed that the class would support such an act. Lack of differentiation resulted in the failure to stand apart and give a lead. It cannot be true that a party is always correct. It needs to learn from its activities and mistakes. Only by doing so will it be able to lead.

Sovereignty was an issue. In the Inter-Empresas the UDP was accused by militants of manipulating the organisation so as to conform to UDP thought. In contrast the PRP leadership was prepared to submerge the party into that of the CRTSMs but this never a possibility because they failed to involve a broad layer of independent militants. Although for a short time the CRTSMs managed to work with COPCON and Otelio, and this section of the military also tried to break the bond between the PRP and the CRTSMs. Popular assemblies were often still-born. Those that



survived varied. They were largely influenced by their relationship with the parties. What was striking about the Comité de Luta was that it was both a forum for and independent of parties.

Any talk of seizing power was meaningless unless the new power had the overwhelming support of the industrial working class. In fairness to the revolutionary left in COPCON, influenced by the PRP and MES, this is probably what prevented an attempt at insurrection. But the revolutionaries were not clearly rooted in the working class. Gramsci insisted that the working class cannot be prepared mechanically for the struggle, like an army. Its discipline depends upon consciousness which in turn grows in relation to practical experience of struggle. A trust, a bond needs to be built from the experience of struggle. Examples of this did emerge such as the Comité de Luta.

In Portugal the revolutionary tradition lacked a party which had a clear strategy of its members working with and through workers' organisations. It has not been the intention of this study to demonstrate that the Socialist Revolution would have succeeded if there had been such a force. That would be extremely deterministic and would ignore many other potent factors. The fundamental consideration must be the nature and political confidence of the workers' movement. Nevertheless, without our attempting to measure the effect, the ideas and organisation of the revolutionary left did appear to have some influence upon the ideas and types of organisations which emerged. This leaves two unanswered questions. Had there been different political influences, would the workers' councils movement have taken a different form? And could that

influence have been stronger and more independent of the vacillations of the popular power movement?

## 7 Finally

At the time, western capitalism was extremely worried by what was happening in Portugal. A workers' council movement in Portugal could have had a far-reaching effects. The Spanish regime was still fascist and looked as if it could have collapsed. The conservative figures put out by the Spanish Government showed that in 1974 1196 industrial disputes were registered, involving 669,861 workers. (16) Troops in other European countries were becoming restless. In Italy more than a thousand soldiers, wearing uniforms and handkerchief masks, took part in a demonstration in support of Portuguese workers and soldiers. (17) Many argue that the Portuguese experience could not have sparked off an international revolution. We cannot know. This has not been an international study. But it has to be remembered that events in Portugal did not occur in isolation. The events occurred because Portugal could not continue to exist in isolation! They were precipitated largely by the liberation movements in the colonies, the same movement which inspired black people in Zimbabwe and Soweto.

Nobody predicted that hundreds of thousands of workers would take over factories, the land and houses, that tens of thousands of soldiers would rebel, that from a tiny political cadre so many would try to quickly learn and put quickly into practice the ideas that explode from those

who are exploited when they try to take control of their own destiny. Only revolutionaries keep such ideas alive in non-revolutionary times. But there occurred in Portugal one of those rare occasions when it was possible that the working class might have determined its own future.

One cannot judge the depth and strength of the Portuguese workers' movement simply by looking at selected examples of potential workers' councils. The movement itself, although racked by problems, was far more extensive than the councils. It was deeply embedded in the workplaces and re-inforced by the occupations of land and buildings. Case studies can present only a slender sliver of the spectrum of the movement itself. The development of the workers' councils was fragile.

But the councils were significant in a way that transcends events in Portugal. They are part of a library of examples of 'alternative' organisation, another political form. This is exactly what Marx recognised in the Paris Commune, the potential basis of a new society. The workers' councils could be only a shadow of the future. But one can learn from shadows. Leon Trotsky wrote in 1930

"The feeble and reflected light of the moon makes possible important conclusions about the sunlight". (18)

## Conclusions - References

- 1 In other situations students, the intelligentsia, Mao's Red Army, Castro, etc. have attempted to extend the struggle beyond the scope of bourgeois social-economic relationships and, in the process have, to use Tony Cliff's phrase 'deflected the revolution'. Refer to Tony Cliff on Trotsky's *Theory of Permanent Revolution*
- 2 Ferreira and Marshall *Portugal's Revolution : Ten Years On*, page 101.
- 3 John Woollacott in a letter to the writer, 3/2/87.
- 4 Bermeo, *The Revolution within the Revolution*, page 67.
- 5 Social Democratic Parties have previously prepared the ground for reaction. In 1919 the German Socialist Party went even further, organising on its own responsibility the crushing of the revolutionary movement in the name of democracy.
- 6 Refer to Macleod's chapter *The French and Italian Communist Parties and the Portuguese Revolution*; which is included in Graham & Wheeler, *In Search of Modern Portugal*.
- 7 Interview with Isabel Guerra, 4/6/84. \*
- 8 Broue, P & Temime, E *Revolution and Civil War in Spain*, page 127.
- 9 Trotsky dealt scathingly with those 'who have a thermometer which they place under the tongue of old Lady history, and by this means infallibly determine the revolutionary temperature' *Whither France*, Colombo, 1961, page 44; quoted by Birchall, *Social Democracy and the Portuguese 'Revolution'*, page 82.
- 10 Trotsky's emphasis, 1905, page 105.
- 11 Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, page 27.
- 12 Bermeo, *The Revolution within the Revolution*, page 98.
- 13 This is not to say the connection was all positive. Refer to the chapter by Gonzalez in *Revolutionary Rehearsals*, page 68.
- 14 Bermeo, *The Revolution within the Revolution*, page 97.
- 15 Harman, *Gramsci versus Reformism*, page 14.
- 16 Figures cited by Cliff, *Portugal at the Crossroads*, page 48.
- 17 Interview with a former Italian soldier in Mestre, Italy, August 1978. This soldier, who had been a member of Lotta Continua at the time, also told of solidarity activities from within his barracks. Leaflets were distributed. This soldier, in the middle of the night, broke into the ammunition arsenal and wrote a four foot high slogan in support of the Portuguese revolution.
- 18 Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, Volume One, page 208.

## CHRONOLOGY AFTER APRIL 25TH, 1974

April 25	The coup.
April 26	Junta for National Salvation (JSN) set up. Spínola announces MFA programme on TV.
April 27	Release of political prisoners and arrest of PIDE.
May 1	Mass demonstrations in celebration of International Workers' Day.
Early May	Strikes and factory occupations wave hits all sections of industry. Demands usually included a monthly minimum wage in excess of 6,000 escudos, vacations, participation in control purging of fascists and a limited working week. CTs emerge rapidly in workplaces.
May 10	The fascist leadership of most unions is thrown out by the workers. Widespread occupation of empty (and often unfinished) government housing projects. In Lisbon alone 2000 apartments are occupied.
May 14	Junta for National Salvation legalises occupations, but will not permit more. Censorship abolished.
May 15	Spínola officially proclaimed President.
May 16	Formation of First Provisional Government under Prime Minister Palma Carlos. At Ministerial level this includes PS, PCP, MDP/CDE, PPD and SEDES.
Mid May	Neighbourhood commissions are formed in many shanty towns and public housing estates.
May 25	Police use water-cannons against left-wing demonstrations calling for the release of Cuban guerilla Captain Peralta. Radio Renascença censured for reporting this news.
May 26	Minimum salary established at 3,300 escudos.
May 29	Timex launch appeal for 'a day's wages for the workers on strike'.
June 7	Saldanha Sanches (MRPP) imprisoned for calling on troops to desert. Demonstration for his release.
June 14	Riots by common law prisoners who want civil rights.
June 17	Postal strike (CTT) begins (telephone and postal workers) for guaranteed work week, vacation and overtime pay and the purging of fascists. Denounced by the PCP. Army plans to occupy post offices.
June 19	Spínola meets President Nixon in the Azores.
July 8	Formation of COPCON (Continental Operational Command).
July 9	Collapse of 1st Provisional Government. Palma Carlos resigns two days later.
July 18	Second Provisional Government takes office, which includes PS, PPD, PCP and SEDES. Vasco Gonçalves is Prime Minister.
July 20	Two military officers who refused to order their troops against the CTT strike are arrested.
July 23	Military Junta for Angola formed with Admiral Rosa Coutinho as governor. White riots in Mozambique against

- independence.
- July 25 Demonstration in Lisbon for independence of colonies.
- July 27 Spínola recognises the right of the colonies to independence. Press law promulgated.
- August 9 Establishment of diplomatic relations with the USSR.
- August 12 Unsuccessful prison revolt by ex-PIDES.
- August 27 Government introduces anti-strike law institutionalising and limiting the right to strike. Strike by TAP workers.
- August 28 MFA officers threaten to arrest striking TAP workers.
- September Occupation of old housing belonging to local government.
- September 7 Lusaka agreement - independence for Mozambique under FRELIMO set for September 25, 1975.
- September 10 Independence of Guinea-Bissau. Speech by Spínola against 'anarchy'. He calls on the 'silent majority' for their support. Nationalisation of the central banks (Banco de Portugal, Banco de Angola, Banco Nacional Ultramarino).
- September 12 Lisnave workers march into Lisbon in forbidden demonstration against anti-strike law. Law to control the rents on new housing and giving landlords 120 days to rent their housing units or turn them over to the government to rent.
- September 23 Demonstration by TAP workers against use of military to break their strike.
- September 26 Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves publicly insulted by Spínola at a bull fight in Lisbon.
- September 27 The government authorises a demonstration by the 'silent majority'.
- Sept. 27-29 Barricades go up around Portugal to stop the right-wing, 'silent majority' demonstration.
- September 29 Spínola resigns.
- September 30 Third Provisional Government formed (PS, PCP and PPD) with Vasco Gonçalves as Prime Minister, Costa Gomes as President. The Committee of 20 replaces the JSN.
- October Chemical workers union comes out against PCP control of Intersindical. Factories are occupied, products sold on the streets.
- 21 October 7th Congress of the PCP declares it no longer supports the call for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.
- November 4 Meeting of CDS youth section broken up by MRPP demonstrators. Police fire into crowd. One dead, sixteen wounded.
- November 11 Law decreeing 45 hour week for agricultural workers.
- December Many strikes and occupations - especially in construction, steel, and textiles, as owners cut back on work, laid off workers, and refused to pay the decreed December bonus. Meetings of agricultural workers demanding better working conditions, minimum wage, equal pay for equal work.
- December 6 First plenary of the MFA Coordinating Committee.
- December 15 First Congress of the Socialist Party.

## 1975

- January 13 MFA Coordinating Commission announces its support for *unicidade*, i.e. that each trade would be represented by one union and that there would be one legally recognised central trade union federation.
- January 14 Gigantic Intersindical demonstration in favour of *unicidade*.
- January 15 Alvor Agreement, setting up a transitional government in Angola, with independence to come on November 11, 1975.
- January 20 The principle of *unicidade* supported legally.
- January 25 Land occupations spread in Alentejo.
- January 27 Inter-Empresas meeting attended by delegates from 37 CTs finalises the organisation for the demonstration of February 7th.
- January 26 Rally of the CDS in Porto closed by counter-demonstration and the Armed Forces have to intervene to get the delegates out.
- February Occupation of vacant private housing begins around the country as the 120 days notice, as required by the housing law, expires.
- February 2 Recognition of the right of divorce. National meeting of CTs organised by the PCP.
- February 7 Demonstration by Inter-Empresas against NATO visit and rising unemployment. Massive participation despite prohibition by government and attack by PCP.
- Feb. 10-17 First occupations of agricultural land.
- February 21 Melo Antunes' Plan for Economic and Social Policy is published. Elections for a Provisional Constituent Assembly set for April 12.
- March Housing and land occupations continue.
- March 7 PPD rally in Setubal ends after a counter-demonstration is attacked by the police and one person killed, many wounded. Local police force closed down by the military.
- March 11 Abortive right-wing coup by Spinoist officers. RAL-1 bombed. Spinoist and other officers flee to Spain. End of Third Provisional Government.
- March 12 Radio Renascença returns to the air under workers' control.
- March 14 Nationalisation of all the banks. The MFA Committee of 20 enlarged to 28 and renamed the Council of Revolution.
- March 15 Nationalisation of insurance companies.
- March 23 Corvacho, Northern Military Region commander, denounces the existence of the fascist Portuguese Liberation Army (ELP).
- March 26 Fourth Provisional Government takes office. This includes MDP/CDE and ex-MES, in coalition with PS, PCP and PPD.
- March 31 Unemployment benefit brought in.
- April 2 Beginning of April 25th election campaign.
- April 11 Signing of the pact between the MFA and the political parties.

- April 14      Legalisation of occupied housing.
- April 15      Nationalisation of electricity, transport, oil and gas.  
Agrarian Reform announced; some price freezes.
- April 19      First conference of the CRTSMs (the Revolutionary Councils  
of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors.).
- April 25      Elections for the Provisional Constituent Assembly were  
held. The purpose of the Assembly was to draft a new  
Constitution.
- May 10-15     Strike by 50000 hotel and restaurant workers.
- May 12      Civil war starts in Angola.
- May 19      Republica occupied by its workers. PS condemns this.
- May 20      Republica evacuated.
- May 26      MFA Assembly pledges support for Vasco Goncalves and  
discusses various documents on 'popular power'.
- May 28      Some 400 Maoists (MRPP) arrested by COPCON.
- June 2      First meeting of Constituent Assembly.
- June 8      MFA General Assembly discusses 'Guiding document on  
Popular Power'.
- June 13      Nationalisation of rail and road transport.
- June 16      COPCON allows Republica workers back into premises.
- June 17      Militant CRTSM demonstration calls for the downfall of the  
Provisional Government.
- June 18      Demonstration against decision to hand Radio Renascenca  
back to Church.
- June 21      MFA publish 'Political Action Plan' (PAP).
- June 25      Mozambique becomes independent.
- June 29      First meeting of the Pontinha Popular assembly. 89 PIDEs  
escape from prison.
- July          Land occupations continue. Large demonstrations in the  
North against the MFA and the Government, strongly  
influenced by the Catholic Church.
- July 2-5      Strike wave hits main service industries: Hotels, CTT,  
TLP, TAP. Chemical workers strike in the North.
- July 4      Vast demonstrations in support of struggles at Republica  
and Radio Renascenca.
- July 7-9      General Assembly of MFA institutionalises the Povo/MFA  
Pact.
- July 10      First issue of Republica under workers' control. Socialist  
Party withdraw from the coalition government.
- July 16      Tanks and armed soldiers support a demonstration in Lisbon  
called by Inter-Comissoes (Federation of shanty town  
Neighbourhood Committees). PPD withdraws from Coalition.  
Collapse of Fourth Government.
- July 17      PPD leaves government in solidarity with the PS.
- July 18      Demonstration in Porto in support of the Povo/MFA Pact. PS  
supporters stopped from assembling in Lisbon nevertheless  
a number of PS demonstrations around the country that  
weekend; against the Povo/MFA pact and the take-over of  
Republica.
- July 21      Fifth Division reiterates its support for Vasco Goncalves.
- July 25      Costa Gomes warns that 'revolution is taking place at too  
fast a pace'. A 'troika', ie a three part directorate,  
comprising Costa Gomes, Vasco Goncalves and Otelo de



- Carvalho is set up by the MFA assembly. It never functioned.
- End July In the north and centre attacks against left party headquarters (especially PCP) begin.
- August The land occupations continue in the south and centre of the country.
- August 7 Publication of the Document of the Nine.
- August 8 Vasco Goncalves forms the fifth Provisional Government, supported by PCP and MDP.
- August 13 COPCON document attacks fifth Government and calls for strengthening of organs of 'popular power'.
- August 20 Massive demonstration in Lisbon in support of COPCON document.
- August 22 Fifth Provisional Government publishes its programme.
- August 25 The fifth Division was closed down by COPCON and the President. The PCP forms an alliance with left-wing groups (FUP).
- August 27 Another massive demonstration in Lisbon in support of FUP demands.
- August 28 PCP leaves FUP, which becomes the Revolutionary United Front (FUR). Azevedo appointed Prime Minister.
- August 29 Vasco Goncalves resigns (end of fifth Provisional Government).
- August 31 South Africa invades southern Angola.
- September Housing and land occupations become more intense.
- September 1 Law against layoffs goes into effect.
- September 5 MFA convokes its assembly at Tancos - the Army and Air Force do not attend and forces the resignation of Vasco Goncalves, the Chief of Staff.
- September 8 SUV movement (Soldiers United Will Win) issues its first communique. A company of Military Police refuses to go to Angola.
- September 10 SUV demonstration in Porto; 30,000 people including 1500 soldiers. ITT announces it is withdrawing financially from Portugal. Re-integration into the MFA Revolutionary Council of those suspended on August 29.
- September 11 SUV demonstration in Lisbon. Goncalvists expelled from the Council of Revolution.
- September 13 Military police demonstrate against being sent to Angola.
- September 18 Large number of land occupations.
- September 19 Sixth Provisional Government takes office; this includes the PPD, PS and PCP.
- September 20 Disabled ex-servicemen occupy the toll-bridge over the Tagus estuary and collect money in support of Republica.
- September 25 SUV (Soldiers United Will Win) demonstration in Lisbon goes on to free two militants from military prison in Traffaria.
- September 26 The MRPP dominated National Congress of Factory Committees met in Covilha.
- September 27 The Spanish embassy in Lisbon burnt down.
- September 29 Radio and TV stations occupied by the military. Radio Renascenca silenced.
- September 30 Formation in Setubal of the Comite de Luta, attended by

- 500 people.
- October 7 Occupation in Porto of RASP military base in protest against purging of leftist soldiers and officers.
- October 9 Creation of AMI - elite military intervention force for use against 'disorder'. SUV demonstration in Coimbra.
- October 16 Large demonstration in Setubal organised by the Comité de Luta.
- October 21 Popular Power demonstration forces the re-opening Radio Renascença.
- October 22 Agrarian Reform Centre in Alcacer de Sal destroyed by a bomb. Revolutionary Brigades (the BR in PRP/BR) go underground.
- November 7 Radio Renascença blown up by a unit of paratroopers.
- November 8 Inaugural conference of Cintura Industrial de Lisboa (CIL). 124 workers' commissions represented.
- November 9 Large PS-PPD demonstration in support of Sixth Government. Paratroopers repudiate their dynamiting of Radio Renascença and demand that they be placed under the command of Otelo de Carvalho.
- November 10 123 officers resign from Tancos regiment.
- November 11 Independence of Angola.
- November 12 Construction workers strike and go on to besiege the Constituent Assembly for two days until demands are met.
- November 16 Enormous demonstration in Lisbon, organised by the PCP and CIL, against the Sixth Government.
- November 19 1200 paratroopers, suspended from Tancos, occupy the base.
- November 20 Sixth Provisional Government goes on strike, demands that the Armed Forces guarantee its ability to function. Large demonstration in front of President's palace against the action of the Government.
- November 21 Franco dies. Otelo removed, replaced, and removed again as head of Lisbon Military Region. Military aircraft and air force officers shifted to deactivated NATO base.
- November 24 Otelo replaced as Lisbon Military Commander. Two-hour strike, co-ordinated by CIL, in a number of Lisbon and Setubal factories.
- November 25 The occupation of air bases by paratroopers demanding removal of Air Force Chief of Staff and others is used as pretext for a military coup. 'State of Siege' proclaimed.
- November 26 Commandos force surrender of Military Police, after 3 people are killed. COPCON abolished.
- November 27 Nationalisation of remaining newspapers and radio stations in Lisbon.
- December East Timor invaded by Indonesia. Arms searches in homes, factories, co-operatives, union headquarters; none were found. Some foreigners expelled. Purges in the military, some factories, radio, TV, newspapers.
- December 21 Demonstration in Porto for the release of those taken prisoner on November 25th.
- December 22 República stops publishing and is given back to the PS.
- December 28 Radio Renascença given back to the Catholic Church.

**January, 1976**

A large number of price increases on basic goods are put into effect and demonstrations were organised against rise in cost of living. Demonstrations in Porto (Custoias) and Lisbon (Caxias) for the Liberation of these arrested on November 25th. Four killed at Custoias. Agrarian Reform revised.

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### Daily Papers: Lisbon 1975

A Capital	Left wing
	Owned by the State after March 11th
O Dia	Right wing
O Diario	Close to the PCP
Diario de Lisboa	Close to the PCP
Diario de Noticias	Centre-Left
	Owned by the State after March 11th
Diario Popular	Centre-Left
	Owned by the State after March 11th
Jornal Novo	Right wing
A Luta	Right wing of PS
Republica	First issue under workers' control appeared 10/7/75. Influenced by the UDP
O Seculo	Left wing
	Owned by the State after March 11th

Other Portuguese papers and Journals referred to.

A Verdade	Marxist/Leninist; PCP(ML)
Anglo-Portuguese News	Fortnightly
Accao Comunista	Trotskyist; LCI paper
Alavanca	Intersindical journal
Avante	PCP weekly
O Setubalense	Bi-weekly
	Combate Monthly paper from the Combate group
Esquerda Socialista	Weekly paper of MES until July 75
Estalario	Lisnave shipyard workers' paper
Expresso	A 'quality' weekly
Flama	A monthly glossy magazine
Grito do Povo	Marxist/Leninist; FEC/ML
Fronteira	LUAR paper
Inter-Empresas	Bulletin of the Inter-Empresas
Luta Popular	Daily paper of the MRPP
Movimento	Fortnightly paper of the MFA (Sept 74- July 75)
O Primeiro do Maio	Marxist/Leninist; First of May group
Poder Popular	MES weekly from April 1975
Portugal Socialista	PS weekly
Revolucão	Weekly paper of the PRP/BR
Voz do Povo	Marxist/Leninist; weekly paper of the UDP

Other regular publications, from overseas.

Apoio	American Portuguese Overseas Information Organisation
Big Flame Journal	Big Flame group in Britain
Economist, the	
Imprecor	Fortnightly, United Secretariat of the Fourth International
Intercontinental Press	The Fourth International
International Socialism	The monthly journal of the International Socialists (UK)
New Statesman	Independent Centre Left weekly, London
Our Common Struggle	Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating Committee
Portuguese Bulletin, the	Communist Party of Great Britain
Red Weekly	The IMG in Britain
Socialist Worker	Weekly paper of the International Socialists (UK).
Solidarity	produced by the Solidarity Group in Britain
Workers' Fight	Workers' Fight, UK

## Details of People Interviewed

This is a list of interviews which have been used as source materials and excludes many conversations which helped provide background information. A number of interviews have not been included because the subject matter has not been used. Many earlier interviews, those in 1975 and 1976, were not necessarily dated precisely and in some cases I have extracted useful information but lost the original notes. However the interviews from 1979 onwards have been recorded either on tape or in note form, but usually in both formats. The list is ordered by surname. A number of those people interviewed did not wish to be identified; such instances have been made clear. On occasion the interviewee used a *nome de plume*, or a nick-name, and sometimes I never obtained the full name.

The case studies have introduced, when useful, details about the person in the text. In order to avoid a complex system of cross referencing some of that information may be repeated here.

Jorge Abegao

Interviewed in February 1976 and 5 May, 1984. Abegao, an officer from the Pontinha barracks, was active in setting up the Pontinha Popular Assembly. He had been member of MES. In addition to being based at the barracks he was attached to the MFA Fifth Division. He was closely linked to the MFA 'dynamisation process' and involved in the various discussions about alternative forms of popular power.

Julia Abrantes

I first met her in Manchester when she did a speaking tour arranged by the PWCC. In 1975 and 76 I met her several times at work, which was Automatica Electrica, at that time part of Plesseys. Her branch of Plesseys was located on the Cabo Ruivo industrial estate, on the outskirts of Lisbon. Cabo Ruivo factories figure prominently in a number popular assemblies, and also the CIL. Julia was interviewed in February 1976 about the events of November 25th and the local popular assembly, which was then that of the '7th Zone of Lisbon'.

Carlos Bandeira

Interviewed formally December 1979; I first met him in 1975. He read the Portuguese version of *Portugal at the Crossroads* and wrote off to the International Socialists, asking for further information. At that time he was a school student, on the other side of the Tagus. He translated extracts of a directory of toxic substances into Portuguese, which was subsequently reproduced by the Intersindical. His parents are peasants who live in the centre of Portugal, which he introduced me to. For a time he worked closely with the UDP.

## Acacio Barreiros

Interviewed 26th of April, 1984 in the Constituent Assembly. He was interviewed about the political origins of the Inter-Empresas. At the time of the interview he was a deputy for the PS. In 1976 he was the only member of the UDP elected to the Constituent Assembly and had been a leading activist in 1974.

## Otelio de Carvalho

He was interviewed whilst in London on 26 October 1979, where I heard him deliver a meeting as part of the election campaign of 1979. Most of the interview concerned the contemporary situation and a campaign to support some political prisoners. The planned follow-up interview never took-place.

## Isabel do Carmo

Interviewed on 4th of December, 1979 awaiting trial in Caxias prison and the first of September 1980 in Custodias prison, having being convicted of helping organise bank robberies. A doctor by profession, Isabel was a founding member of the PRP and also spent time in prison under fascism. I met her a number of times in 1975 but never in connection with this research. Most of the interviews were about the Portuguese Political Prisoners Campaign, and other aspects of the situation in Portugal at that time.

## Eduardo Duarte

Eduardo Duarte, December 1979. He was a student leader and an active member of MES.

## Joao Carlos Espada

Interviewed 28/4/84. At the time of interview he was a journalist, working for *Expresso*. He had been one of the leaders of the PCP(R) and on the editorial board of UDP paper, *Voz do Povo*.

## Eugenia

Interviewed February 1976. She had been a member of the Provisional Secretariat of the CRTSMs and, for a short time, close to the PRP. She was on the secretariat representing the 'unemployed'; she was involved in helping in the administration.

## Fernanda

She was interviewed on the 30/4/84. Fernanda asked that her surname not be quoted in the interviews. At the time she was a young assembly worker for the Plessey multi-national. Plessey employed a total of 4,300 workers, most of them women. Fernanda worked at the site on the south bank of the Tagus estuary. She was a member of the first workers' committee. Although she considered herself generally of the left she was not a member of any party. She was delegated to attend meetings of the inter-empresa. She also attended one of the later Inter-Empresa meetings, after it had been formally constituted. The purpose that time was to discuss the attempt by Plessey workers to make international connections. As part of the same process she went on a speaking tour of England.

## Fernando Figueira

He accompanied Artur Palacio in the interview of 2/8/82. Fernando was at the time of the interview in his early thirties but had worked at Lisnave from 1974. He had been an elected delegate to the Workers' Commission. He was a member of the UDP.

## Jorge Freire

I knew Jorge from 1975 when he helped me at the Ministry of Social Communications, where he worked. I made notes from discussions with him at that time and formally interviewed him again in 1979. In 1975 he had participated in the occupation by the workers at the Ministry against their director. He had served in Guinea and had a great deal of time for Spínola. In the 1975 elections he voted for the PPD because, in his view, Sá Carneiro had had the guts to stand up against Caetano.' Subsequently, in 1976, he voted PS but over the years came to support the PCP. Because of his job he was well informed. He picked up a lot about the PCP due to the fact that his wife had been an active member of the PCP for many years.

## Henrique Guerreiro

Interviewed 1/5/84. He was one of the original members of the workplace CT at Sotel in Setúbal which made paper and packaging materials. In 1975 it employed nearly 800 people. The CT was formed on 27th of April 1974. Throughout the period Henrique was very active in the CT and also very involved in the Comité de Luta. His first became politically active in the 1969 elections and he was a member of PCP prior to the 25th of April. He left after April 25th and subsequently joined the PRP. He joined the LCI later, after November 25th, 1975.

## Isabel Guerra

Interviewed 4/6/84. In 1975 she worked in Setubal as 'a sort of Social worker' in the shanty town areas. She was active on the Comité de Luta but not on any of the sub-committees. She had also been an active member of PRP, and prominent in Setubal. She left PRP in 1976 due to 'their inability to re-adjust to completely new political situation.' At the time of interview she was working as an academic.

## Jorge

Interviewed on 2/8/80 and 13/8/80. I first met him in his home town Barreiro, in the autumn of 1975. At that time he was a soldier, serving in a number a variety of barracks. He joined the PRP after March 11th, having attended the first CRTSMs conference. In August and September 1975 he was based in the north in the RTM (regional transport barracks) and was very active in SUV. He subsequently, after November 25th, became a full time organiser for the PRP. At the time of the interviews he was working at Setenave.

## Mauricio Levy

Interviewed formally on 5/5/84 along with another former officer from the Fifth division (Abegao). In 1975 Mauricio was stationed at the Epam Barracks. On March 11th he had been one of the people responsible for the take-over of the state radio service, and using this to broadcast news about the coup attempt. He worked, in addition for the Fifth Division, where he was involved in administration and attended, in this capacity, all the MFA meetings. He left the Army shortly before November 25th and became the international organiser for MES, when I first got to know him.

## Moco

Interviewed 31/4/84. Moco is a 'nick name', which means boy. This particular militant had worked at TAP for many years and participated in all the major struggles there. He was a member of the clandestine group of workers which helped organise the strike of 1973. He was also a member of MES. The interview was mainly about the history of the different committees at TAP, and the varying party influences.

## Luis Castanheira Lopes

Interviewed December, 1979 and August 1980. Luis Lopes was a white collar worker at Petrogul and very active in the CT and in the Petrogul combine of CTs. He was an active member of MES and extremely well informed on workplace and union issues. After November 25th he helped set up a centre called "O Trabalho" where I held a number of the interviews with other workers. He edited of a magazine of the same name;

the centre was sympathetic to the ideas of workers' control.

#### Francisco Louca

'Chico' was a leading member of the LCI, and then the PSR (the LCI changed its name), and was editor of its paper. I interviewed him in December 1979 and again in 1980. He provided background information of the involvement of the LCI in the Inter-Empresas, the Popular Assemblies and SUV, but I have not directly quoted him.

#### Jose Jorge Magalhaes

Interviewed 1/12/79. He had been active in setting up these COZ organisations, and also, a member of MES. At the time of the interview he was working for the textile union as a union organiser.

#### Carlos Nunes

Interviewed 4/6/84. Carlos Nunes started work at the Rocha Yards of Lisnave in April 1972 and has worked there ever since. He is a metalworker by trade. He was elected a delegate to the CDR (Committee to Defend the Revolution - the equivalent of a CT) in May/June 1974 when delegates were first elected, after the 'ad hoc' commission and served on the CT until 1978. He joined the PRP in January 1975 and was a leading member by November 1975. I first met him in August 1975 and helped set up his speaking tour in the UK, where he stayed with me for part of the time. It took many years to re-establish contact.

#### Pedro Olivais

Interviewed April 1976. Whilst working on the Co-operative of Soldado Luis my main source of information was an agronomist who called Pedro, who happened to also be a supporter of LUAR. He was at that time working in conjunction with the agrarian reform centre.

#### 'Our Lady of Fatima' activist.

She was interviewed in December 1975. She was a member of MES and had been very committed to the attempt to establish an assembly. She worked at the Gulbenkein Institute in Lisbon, where there had been a significant struggle by the workers in the summer of 1975.

## Artur Palacio

Interviewed 2/8/82. Artur Palacio was a well known militant who worked at Lisnave for many years. He first became involved with the Communist Party in his teens, in the early 50's. At the time of April 25th he was a militant in one of the Marxist Leninist sects which later was to help to found the UDP and was very involved in the Inter-Empresas meetings. He was also very involved in a Lisbon wide residents' organisation. He had been a member of the Lisnave Workers Commission for most of the time since its inception.

## Maria de Fatima Patriarca

Interviewed 1/9/80. Fatima Patriarca is a sociologist specialising in Industrial Sociology. She was present at the meeting of the Inter-Empresas on the 27th of September; the one which co-ordinated the demonstration of the 28th. She has written a number of substantial articles for *Análise Social*.

## PCP militant.

Interviewed April, 1980. This militant was a long standing member of the PCP, and was released from prison following April 25th. The Party immediately found him as a job working for the electricians union, as a functionary.

## Bruno da Ponte

Bruno da Ponte, in the early sixties, whilst serving in the army, had been implicated in a military 'adventure' in Beja. He left Portugal as a result. I first met him in Manchester in 1975. Shortly afterwards he went back to Portugal and joined the PRP. He was made responsible for liaison with English speaking groups and I frequently met him in this capacity, and also interviewed him on the November 29th and 30th, 1979. An interview on the 27th of November, 1975, cited in *Lessons of 25th of November*, has been used here.

## Francisco Queroz

I interviewed him in December 1979 and on 1/5/84. He was very active in Setubal, both in the Comité de Luta and in a number of political parties. In 1975 he was a member of the PRP but he left and joined the LCI.

## PRP activist, Setubal

This comrade was obviously extremely busy, but in August 1975 took the writer around various parts of the town and spent some time talking



about the involvement about the far left in Setubal.

#### Agostinho Roseta

Interviewed 27/4/84 and 3/5/84. Roseta was a student leader in the late 1960's and then worked for as a functionary of the Textile Union. He was also a *miliciano* (conscript officer) in 1974/75. He participated in April 25th and September 28th. He was expelled from the army after November 25th. He was also a member of MES.

#### Saldanha Sanches

Interviewed 4/4/84. He was a member of the PCP and in prison from 1966 to 1971. He joined the MRPP and was the editor of their daily paper, *Luta Popular*, in 1974. The MRPP was extremely critical of the MFA which resulted in Saldanha Sanches, as the editor, being imprisoned (7/7/84) and the MRPP not being allowed to stand in the 1975 elections. He left them to join the UDP in 1975. Thoroughly disillusioned Sanches left the MRPP shortly afterwards and wrote a book called the MRPP; instrument of counter-revolution. When interviewed he was no longer active on the left; he was working as a university lecturer in law.

#### Setenave worker.

This middle aged engineering worker, a member of the PRP, in August 1975, showed the writer around parts of the Setenave shipyards and talked about the various political forces and their relationship to the workers' struggles in Setenave.

#### Fernando Silva

Interviewed 30/8/80. Fernando Silva worked on the railways as a white collar worker. During 1975 he took leave and toured Portugal with a cultural organisation. This group toured worked in collaboration with the Fifth Division as part of their 'dynamisation' process. It visited many towns and villages. He was at the first Pontinha assembly and in the north in August 1975. He joined the UDP late in 1974, when it was formed, and later joined the PCP(R).

#### Afonso da Sousa.

Interviewed 31/8/80 (and on several other occasions). He fled from Portugal in order to avoid conscription, and lived for a number of years in Britain. There he was active in the Transport and General workers Union and helped form an International Workers' Branch in London. He was also active in a Portuguese Solidarity campaign and had close links with the International Socialists. He went back to Portugal in early 1975 and joined the PRP/BR, and this is when the author first got to know him. At

that time he was using his party name, Carlos. He was now willing to join the army and, indeed, was more than happy to sign up for the Military Police where he became the co-ordinator for the PRP cell in the barracks; the reason for this he said was 'I was the one who carried the plastic bag'. When I met Afonso again in 1979 he had recently been released from prison, where he had been for well over a year. He had been arrested for robbing a bank. Despite his innocence, and a campaign supported by Amnesty International, he was not released until a fellow comrade confessed to the crime.

Jose Sousa

Interviewed 29/4/84. He was active in youth opposition movement (MUD) in the mid-fifties. He went into exile in Paris. Active in CDE. Founding member of PRP and present at their congress in Algeria. PRP comrades used assumed names; Jose Sousa was called Crac which means "one of the lads". I first heard him speak when, as a member of the the PRP leadership, he spoke at the IS conference in London, June 1975. An interview with him at that time, *Portugal - the views of a PRP leader*, was published in the International Socialism Journal, July/August 1975, number 80. By the late summer he was not available to meet visiting comrades. The rumour that he had been squeezed out of the leadership because he took a 'Leninist' position on open recruitment and a daily paper. As it turned out the rumours proved to have been true. It was only in 1984 that I was able to meet and interview him. This interview started at 9.00 pm and finished at 3.00 am the following day.

TAP worker

Interviewed 5/8/82. He was a TAP militant, close to the UDP and active in Pontinha assembly.